

THE LONDON QUARTERLY & HOLBORN REVIEW

Edited by J. Alan Kay, M.A., Ph.D.

JULY 1959

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND METHODIST DOCTRINE

GEORGE CLAUDE BAKER, JR., PH.D., D.D., S.T.M.

WILLIAM R. CANNON, PH.D., D.D., LL.D.

CHARLES A. COULSON, M.A., D.SC., PH.D., F.R.S.

RUPERT E. DAVIES, M.A., B.D.

L. HAROLD DeWOLF, PH.D., S.T.D.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE, M.A., B.D.

FRANZ HILDEBRANDT, PH.D., LIC. THEOL.

E. ANKER NILSEN, M.A., PH.D.

HAROLD ROBERTS, M.A., D.D., PH.D.

E. GORDON RUPP, M.A., D.D.

DAVID C. SHIPLEY, M.A., TH.M., PH.D.

MACK B. STOKES, B.D., PH.D.

WILLIAM STRAWSON, B.D., M.TH.

LILIAN TOPPING



THE EPWORTH PRESS

[FRANK H. CUMBERS]

25-35 CITY ROAD LONDON EC1

Four Shillings and Sixpence Net

THE LONDON QUARTERLY AND HOLBORN REVIEW
is published on 25th March, June, September and December. All contributions (typewritten, if possible) should be sent to the Editor, 25-35, City Road, London, E.C.1, with stamped addressed envelope.

Contents

Editorial Comments by A. Raymond George, M.A., B.D., and Lilian Topping	161	The Relation of Faith and Order in the New Testament by George Claude Baker, Jr., PH.D., D.D., S.T.M.	217
The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies	162	The People of God by Rupert E. Davies, M.A., B.D.	223
A Theological Evaluation of Natural Theology by L. Harold DeWolf, PH.D., S.T.D.	165	Can the Distinctive Methodist Emphasis be said to be Rooted in the New Testament? by Franz Hildebrandt, PH.D., LIC. THEOL.	230
Some Recent Developments in Science and their Implications to Theology by Charles A. Coulson, M.A., D.SC., PH.D., F.R.S.	176	Wesley's Doctrine of the Last Things by William Strawson, B.D., M.TH.	240
Prevenient Grace by E. Anker Nilsen, M.A., PH.D.	188	The Development of Theology in American Methodism in the Nineteenth Century by David C. Shipley M.A., TH.M., PH.D.	249
The Doctrine of Conversion by Harold Roberts, M.A., D.D., PH.D.	195	The Future of the Methodist Tradition by E. Gordon Rupp, M.A., D.D.	264
The Holy Spirit in Biblical Theology by Mack B. Stokes, B.D., P.H.D.	199	Our Contributors	275
Perfection by William R. Cannon, PH.D., D.D., LL.D.	213		

Ninety Years of Child Saving

Over 40,000 orphaned and needy girls and boys have been helped by the National Children's Home since it was founded by Dr Stephenson in 1869. Though social conditions have improved since then, there are still children in need and so the work must continue.

Contrary to a widespread misapprehension, the Home is not nationalized and it still depends on voluntary contributions. It is hoped, therefore, you will keep on helping.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOME

CHIEF OFFICES: 85 Highbury Park, London, N.5

Editorial Comments

THIS NUMBER of the LONDON QUARTERLY & HOLBORN REVIEW is entirely devoted to some of the papers read at the first Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, which was held at Lincoln College, Oxford, in July 1959. How this Institute originated and what it did can best be seen from the official report which it published, and which is printed immediately after this editorial. Suffice it to say that it was the first gathering of world Methodism for such specifically theological purposes, and that it was unanimously felt that the contacts thus made must in some way be continued.

World Methodist Conferences publish their Proceedings in bulky volumes. When, therefore, as in the case of the Conference at Lake Junaluska, the QUARTERLY publishes some of the papers, it does so in an abbreviated form, as a foretaste of the volume to come. In this case no such volume is contemplated, and therefore the papers that are here published are given in full. Several have had to be omitted. The paper by Dean Stanley R. Hopper on 'The Problem of Faith and Belief and our Apologetic Concern' is omitted because it appears in *Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, published this year by Harper's. The paper on 'Justification' by the Rev. Philip S. Watson is omitted because it is to be included in a volume entitled *The Concept of Grace*, which is shortly to be published by the Epworth Press. The papers by the Rev. Dr Norman Snaith, President of the British Conference, on 'Grace and Faith in the Old Testament', by the Rev. Professor C. Kingsley Barrett on '*Kerygma* and Response in the New Testament', and by the Rev. A. Raymond George on 'Assurance' are omitted because, though they served their purpose at the time, they are, in the opinion of their authors at least, not ripe for publication in their present form; it is to be hoped that they may be revised and published later. The opening address and the addresses which dealt with the situation in various parts of the world or with the structure of world Methodism have also been omitted. Nor can the sermons preached be included. Another most serious loss is the exposition of the first eight chapters of Romans, with which each day began, a task most ably shared by the Rev. Dr A. Marcus Ward of Richmond and the Rev. Professor Ernest W. Saunders of Garrett, Evanston.

Despite these limitations, it is hoped that these pages will convey to our readers something of the stimulus which the Institute itself conveyed to those who took part in it, even though they can hardly convey the warmth of the fellowship and the liveliness of the discussion.

Both the Institute itself and the cost of enlarging this number of the LONDON QUARTERLY have been supported by generous gifts.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE
LILIAN TOPPING

THE OXFORD INSTITUTE OF METHODIST THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

(A) THE RECORD

AN Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, sponsored by the Oxford Memorial Committee of the World Methodist Council, was held in Lincoln College, Oxford, from 19th to 29th July. The project, as conceived at Lake Junaluska in 1956, was designed not for sectarian ends, but to give an opportunity for representatives of world Methodism to consider how, as a world communion, we might play a worthier part in the thinking and action of the Universal Church.

The membership, upward of a hundred, the majority of whom attended the whole Institute, represented as wide as possible a cross-section of world Methodism. They came from five continents, and though the larger part was from the United States and the British Isles, there were members of the Churches of Europe, Australasia, Africa and Asia. There were men and women, ordained and lay; teachers, pastors, students, members, housewives; in age ranging upward from the twenties. Among those taking part were the President of the World Methodist Council, the President of the British Conference, and the President-Designate of the Methodist Church in Ireland. Among the visitors were Bishop Ivan Lee Holt and Dr Elmer Clark.

On the first evening, the Institute was welcomed by the Chairman of the District and inaugurated by its Warden, the Rev. Reginald Kissack, of Rome. Each Sunday the members attended worship at Wesley Memorial Church. On the second Sunday morning there was an ecumenical service, with participants from the various countries represented, and in the evening members conducted worship in a number of nearby village churches.

Each day began with prayers in Lincoln College Chapel and, after breakfast, with Bible study on Romans 1-8. The main morning address was followed by group discussions, and that of the afternoon by questions and contributions from the whole membership. Each evening, after dinner, the Institute met at Wesley Memorial Church, in the room used by the John Wesley Society, for informal discussions, the nature of which was determined, in part, by the course of the proceedings of the Institute.

On one such evening, there was a discussion on Church union which included evidence from the larger part of the globe. Later on, consideration was given to the form to be taken by this account of the Institute. Here it became abundantly clear that, although the Institute did not wish to commit itself to any elaborate statement of conclusions, it was in no doubt as to the great value of the meetings not least in respect of that to which they pointed for the future of Methodism and its place in the One Church of God.

The papers, read by a carefully chosen panel of experts, covered the main elements of Methodist Doctrine: Justification, Conversion, Prevenient Grace, Assurance, Perfection, Wesley's Doctrine of the Last Things, and an examination of the New Testament Basis of the Distinctive Methodist Emphasis. Other papers, on the wider aspects of Biblical Theology, dealt with Grace and Faith in the Old Testament, the People of God, *Kerygma* and Response in the

New Testament, the Holy Spirit, and the relation between Faith and Order in the New Testament.

In this context two contributions which aroused special interest, as throwing new light on the problem of communication, were that of Dr Stanley Hopper on Faith and Belief, and our Apologetic Task; and Dr Harold DeWolf's Theological Evolution of Natural Theology. The discussion of the latter was so urgent as to demand a special session in which the writer of the paper and Dr Franz Hildebrandt, with others, argued the main issue.

Dr Benson Perkins's survey of World Methodism served to put other issues in perspective. On the one hand, looking backward, we heard an account of the development of American Methodist Theology in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, and very much in the present, were accounts by eye-witnesses of circumstances in Germany, and South Africa, giving poignant examples of a situation that repeats itself all over the world. In another context, but no less relevant, the Institute heard Professor Charles Coulson speak about recent developments in science.

On the final morning, after hearing Dr Gordon Rupp outline his views on the Future of the Methodist Tradition, the Institute shared in the Covenant Service at Wesley Memorial Church.

(B) THE FINDINGS

The findings (given in John Wesley's room, Lincoln College, Oxford, on 27th July) were as follows:—

The hearing of the papers and their discussion in groups and in open session, have led us to ask a number of questions, and to express certain concerns:—

(1) *The Doctrinal Position of Methodism.* Is the theological tie which now binds world Methodism, 'Our Doctrine', that is, distinctive theological emphases inherited from the Wesleys?

How far does our theological inheritance from the Wesleys remain a peculiar Methodist possession, in view of theological changes both in our own and in other Churches?

How far are these changes due to the urgent political, cultural, economic, and religious problems and pressures of the last one hundred and fifty years?

Is not the task of Methodists to perform with the Scriptures in the twentieth century a task like that which John Wesley performed in the eighteenth century?

Our sense of indebtedness for the biblical insights of Wesley is profound, and we believe these insights will long continue to be relevant. Does not loyalty to this great contribution of the Wesleys require us now to go further and perform in the twentieth century a like task of bringing the world under the judgement of the Word of God? Is it not the proper work of the Holy Spirit in every generation to make Christ and His commands contemporary?

(2) *Further Theological Issues.* We observe that Wesley's teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in Prevenient Grace, Conversion, Justification, Assurance and Perfect Love, together with the actual work of the Spirit in the Methodist Revival, provide valuable help in interpreting the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Ought not the implications of this fact to be considered more carefully by Methodist Theologians?

Methodism is not only concerned with traditional doctrines but also must face the philosophical problems of the modern world. Questions are raised about the sources of religious truth, in considering whether there is a valid natural theology. Further questions are being raised about the significance of religious language, as when it is asked how far such language is to be taken literally and how far symbolically.

Cannot Methodism make its contribution here also by reminding men that they are saved not by what they believe and say about God, but by God Himself?

Throughout our discussions we have been aware of the problem of communicating our Gospel. We have seen that the Gospel needs to be expressed not only on the intellectual level, but also in courageous fidelity and practical witness at the point of human division of race, nation, and class.

(3) *The Church*. John Wesley's 'catholic spirit', his exhortation to his followers to walk the 'royal way of universal love', and the temper of original Methodism were alien from a narrow sectarianism. If today we stress the value of our common inheritance as Methodists throughout the world, it is not that we seek to perpetuate our own life as some kind of world sect, but because of a responsibility toward all these who, like ourselves, have a place within the one covenanted People of God.

We are convinced that in our time the People called Methodists should enter afresh into a present and living enjoyment of the great gifts which God gave our fathers, that they may be made ever more widely available in the growing unity of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

(c) THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The members of the Institute, being convinced of the great value of the meetings, strongly urge that further meetings be held at Oxford, at suitable intervals; that the next be held, if possible, in 1962; that all possible ways of theological co-operation be explored, and that the idea of a permanent house in Oxford be kept in mind.

A THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF NATURAL THEOLOGY*

I. DEFINITIONS

THE STANDARD philosophical dictionaries by Eisler and Thormeyer simply mention the distinction between revelational or churchly theology on the one hand and rational or philosophical theology on the other. The latter is called natural theology. Lalande defines it as that theology 'which is based only on experience and reason' ('*qui ne s'appuie que sur l'expérience et la raison*'). In *An Encyclopedia of Religion* (V. Ferm, ed.), William Glenn Harris seems to define natural theology in much narrower terms, as 'that knowledge of God obtained by observing the visible processes of nature', but he adds: 'The inward frame of man responds to the external conditions and circumstances of life. . . .' The article as a whole implies that he means to take account of man's subjective experience, at least his moral experience, in defining natural theology.

In Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, D. S. Adam says that the aim of natural theology 'is to set forth in a methodical, orderly way all that may be known concerning God and the world and man, and their mutual relations, from that general revelation which is given in nature, mind, and history'. This approximates to the most general uses of the phrase. Sometimes, as in Lord Gifford's provisions for the Gifford Lectures, it is made explicit that such natural theology must be developed 'without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation'.

J. V. Langmead Casserley, in his useful book, *Graceful Reason*, distinguishes four different types of natural theology, and this classification is helpful in providing a more precise analysis of the term. The first type, says Casserley, is a Godward 'movement of the mind', regarded as a natural proclivity due to man's having been 'made for God'. Second, natural theology may be regarded as argument from 'naturalistic premises' to the validity of religious belief or behaviour (e.g. he mentions the cosmological argument). Third is 'a theology of nature'—that is, a theological interpretation of nature. Such an interpretation might itself be drawn from the Bible or some other source regarded as 'special' revelation. Fourth, one may designate as natural theology 'the tracing of an analogy between . . . natural and evangelical experience' (p.8).

There is a fifth conception of natural theology not included in Casserley's classification, but set forth by William Temple. This is the philosophical evaluation of doctrines believed to be revealed. Obviously, such a natural theology is closely related to the second type above. However, this fifth type includes an explicit disclaimer of its own qualifications to construct a system of theological truth. In contrast to revealed theology and to the claims of some natural theology, *this* natural theology is, in its chief function, not constitutive but regulative, not constructive but critical (see Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, especially pp.17-19, 518-20).

Of the types defined above, the third is universally accepted by Christian theologians as a proper undertaking. The fourth type, as such, may be purely illustrative and pedagogic, thus raising no basic theological issues. If more than

* This paper has appeared in the *Journal of Religious Thought*, Washington, D.C.

illustrative, it passes over into the second or fifth type, sometimes with intimations of confidence in the first.

The argument of this paper, then, must turn on types one, two and five. All these have in common the idea that valid support for some truth about God or about man's rightful destiny can be found in considerations logically independent of the biblical revelation and of a prior commitment to Christian faith. Precisely this idea is rejected by some recent and contemporary theologians, who thus dismiss the possibility of natural theology in any of the senses with which we are here concerned.

II. SOME RECENT THEOLOGIANS WHO HAVE REJECTED NATURAL THEOLOGY AS HERE DEFINED

Søren Kierkegaard believed that the 'infinite distance' between time and eternity made quite impossible any crossing from man to God by the thought of man. Man can conjure up all kinds of human substitutes for God, but all these are mere idols. The metaphysical task is for man simply impossible, as Socrates well knew. The only knowledge of God which is either possible for man or necessary to his salvation is the acceptance by faith of the supreme Paradox, the eternal God become man in time and crucified by men. This acceptance is not an act of the intellect, but is rather a passionate decision of the will.

Karl Barth professes to be 'an avowed opponent of all natural theology' (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, p.6), because he is a Reformed theologian. 'Both the Reformation and the teaching of the Reformation churches', he says, 'stand in an antithesis to "Natural Theology"' (ibid., p.8). To Barth's position our principal attention will be directed in the third section of this paper.

Emil Brunner rejects natural theology as here defined. Formerly he used the term with approval, but it led to misinterpretation of his position, at least by Barth. Hence he proposed, in his reply to Barth's *Nein!*, to call the teaching which he accepted 'the Christian doctrine of general revelation or of revelation in nature' (John Baillie, ed., *Natural Theology*, p.9; cf. pp.10 and 11; cf. also Brunner's *Revelation and Reason*, pp.60-3). Brunner wished to disavow any notion that the knowledge of God was 'natural' to man (type one in Casserley's classification) or that the 'revelation in nature' could be properly understood by a mind not cleansed and renewed by God's grace through faith in Christ.

Karl Barth's rejection of natural theology has been more radical and more sustained than Brunner's. It is supported both by considerations shared with Brunner and by other objections. In theological circles Barth's putting of the issues is probably more influential at present than is Kierkegaard's thought on this specific subject. Hence it is to Barth that we here direct major attention.

III. EVALUATION OF KARL BARTH'S REJECTION

We are not here concerned with following the course of Barth's more recent modifications of his views concerning natural theology. We propose, rather, to evaluate his forthright rejection and arguments against natural theology in his Gifford Lectures and elsewhere, leaving aside the question whether he would himself still approve all these arguments precisely as they stand. For the examination of Barth's subsequent thought on natural law, one would need especially to study his distinction between 'laws' (*Gesetze*), which he rejects, and 'spheres and relations' (*Bereiche und Verhältnisse*) in which he says God as

Creator has placed man, to live 'dutifully or undutifully' (*gehorsam oder ungehorsam*) (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III.4, p.31). It would be important also to note that what God has commanded us in Christ is required of all men, and in places to observe that this doctrine may bring Barth near to a doctrine of natural law under another name and with dialectical modifications (see *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II.2, III.4; more is promised toward the end of IV). In general, of course, Barth has continued to reject natural theology.

1. Grounds of the Rejection

(a) *Barth's Vocation as Reformed Theologian*. When, in his Gifford Lectures, Barth disclaims any intention of making a direct contribution to natural theology, he recalls that he is a Reformed theologian and 'it cannot really be the business of a Reformed theologian to raise so much as his little finger to support this undertaking in any positive way' (p.6). However, he concedes that some Reformed theologians have found no such incompatibility between their vocation and natural theology (*ibid.*, p.5), and even Calvin and Luther made use of natural theology (*ibid.*, p.8). The incompatibility is not, then, self-evident, but must be explained.

(b) *Sola Scriptura*. Barth holds that Luther and Calvin desired 'to see both the Church and human salvation founded on the Word of God *alone*, on God's revelation in Jesus Christ, as it is attested in the Scripture, and on faith in that Word' (*ibid.*, pp.8-9). Natural theology would build on something other than the Scriptures and God's revelation in Jesus Christ, hence must be regarded as opposed to the basic principle of the Reformation.

(c) *Sola Fide; Sola Gratia*. Similarly, Barth observes that natural theology assumes that some truth about God and rightful human destiny can be known independent of prior commitment to Christian faith and of the grace which God gives in and subsequent to such commitment. Natural theology therefore contradicts the Reformation principles '*sola fide*' and '*sola gratia*'. To attempt anything without faith and humble dependence upon God's grace is to perform an act of presumptuous, sinful pride.

(d) *Natural Theology leads only to Idols*. The God who has made Himself known to us in Christ, Barth contends, is not the 'God' of Aristotle or of any other philosopher learning without benefit of the biblical revelation (*Doctrine of the Word of God*, p.449). Hence to worship the 'God' of natural theology is only to worship the creature of man's reason, an idol of man's own making, an idol possessing no reality beyond man's deluded imagination. The one only God is not conceived in human thought at all. Thus, in his Gifford Lectures, Barth says concerning the Scottish Confession: 'What is conceived by all other "believers" past, present and future, whatever the manner, place and date of their belief is certainly not what the Scottish Confession means by the object of its profession. The Confession does not *conceive* its object at all; it acknowledges it: "We confess and acknowledge"' (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, p.13). Similarly, in *Dogmatics in Outline*, Barth writes: 'God is not only unprovable and unsearchable, but also inconceivable. No attempt is made in the Bible to define God—that is, to grasp God in our concepts' (p.38). To worship the 'God' we conceive, on the other hand, is idolatry and anthropocentric presumption.

(e) *Total Depravity*. Natural theology implies a denial of man's total depravity. Since man is known by the Christian to be totally depraved, able to contribute absolutely nothing to God's communication of Himself, even by some capacity or preparation to receive it, the whole notion of a natural theology is misconceived (see, e.g., *Nein!*, passim; *Dogmatics in Outline*, p.1).

2. Evaluation of These Grounds

(a) If Reformed theology is true, then that is reason enough for not contradicting it, regardless of the calling to be a Reformed theologian. But why suppose that all which Calvin and Luther taught is true? Presumably they were men and not God. Some of Barth's strictures against idolatry might be brought against his own appeal to 'the theology of the Reformation', as if this were for him final. Moreover, when it suits his fancy, Barth does not, in fact, hesitate to depart from Luther and Calvin—for example, when he laments the fact that both of them made use of natural theology!

(b) When Barth objects that natural theology is contrary to the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura*, it is quite proper to raise the question whether that Reformation principle is true. To assume that the authority of the original Reformation teachings is such that it must not be challenged would be, in fact, to contradict the principle that only the scriptures have such authority.

Actually, however, neither of Barth's quasi-biblical authorities, Luther and Calvin, taught that nothing could be known about God or about His will for men otherwise than through the Bible. It is interesting that Barth does not directly claim such doctrine to have been taught by the Reformers. He says, rather, that 'the revival of the gospel by Luther and Calvin consisted in their desire to see both the church and human salvation founded on the Word of God alone, on God's *revelation in Jesus Christ*, as it is attested in the Scripture, and on faith in that Word' (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, pp.8-9). Is such a desire inconsistent with belief in the validity of natural theology? Certainly many kinds of knowledge and authority are valid on which it is not proposed to found the Church and on which it is not supposed that human salvation is dependent.

It is obvious that Luther and Calvin were rightly concerned to deflate the presumptuous claims of the Roman Catholic Church for itself, its ever-accumulating traditions, its intricate system of doctrine and laws, and the authority of its priesthood. It is well known that the Reformers were attacking these overweening Roman claims when they erected their principle of *sola Scriptura*. They were denying that the Church had the right to demand of its members or its priests acceptance of doctrines additional to those taught or implied in the Scriptures. Both Calvin and Luther, but especially Luther, had at times sharply hostile things to say about philosophy. However, these anti-philosophical outbursts had only a historically accidental, and not logically essential, connexion with the principle that the Church should be founded solely on the Word of God, as attested in the Scriptures.

The example of both Calvin and Luther, as Barth regrets to observe, does include the positive use of natural law, and, more guardedly, they affirmed signs of God in His natural creation. Such use of natural theology did not, as Barth supposes, contradict their principle of *sola Scriptura*, for they did not

hold that through such use of natural theology they had discovered new doctrines additional to the teachings of Scripture and necessary to salvation. Rather, they found in natural theology a confirmation of the biblical teaching that God has provided all men with such a knowledge of Him and of His will for them that they are without excuse for their sin and unbelief and are rightly under His condemnation. (Note, for example, Calvin's citation of Cicero's natural theology in support of this teaching, in the *Institutes*, I.iii.1.) Likewise, Calvin found natural law, and even the laws enacted by magistrates so long as consistent with God's commands, to be binding on the Christian conscience, while he insisted that no one had a right 'to prescribe any new form for the worship of God, and impose a necessity in things that were left free and indifferent' (Calvin, *Institutes*, V.x.5; cf. IV.x.16 and IV.x.27).

It must be said further that if we were to maintain that the Christian ought to hold so exclusively to the Scripture as to deny the validity of any knowledge of God through any other channels, then we should be contradicting ourselves. For the Bible itself occasionally refers to the teachings which God has given concerning Himself through the world of nature (as in Job 37-41; Ps. 19₁₋₄; Matt. 5₄₄₋₅; Rom. 1₂₀) and concerning His righteous law in the natural endowment of the human heart (as in Rom. 2₁₋₂, 12-16).

(c) The argument that it is proud and sinful to believe that any knowledge of God is possible prior to, or independent of, faith in Christ, and with the aid of the grace imparted only to those who have such faith, will require less discussion.

Certainly this objection is not supported by Calvin's teaching. Calvin writes: 'We lay it down as a position not to be controverted, that the human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of a Deity' (*Institutes*, I.iii.1). Even men's sin does not eradicate this knowledge of God, Calvin contends, though it does make it inoperative in the control of their passions. Thus he writes:

Yet this is a further proof of what I now contend for, that an idea of God is naturally engraved on the hearts of men, since necessity extorts a confession of it, even from reprobates themselves. In the moment of tranquillity, they facetiously mock the Divine Being, and with loquacious impertinence derogate from His power. But if any despair oppress them, it stimulates them to seek him, and dictates concise prayers, which prove that they are not altogether ignorant of God, but that what ought to have appeared before had been suppressed by obstinacy (*Institutes*, I.iv.4).

It is not proud and sinful to believe what is clearly the truth—a truth in this instance affirmed by Calvin and the Bible, as well as by a great quantity of human experience. Calvin cited an exaggeration of this truth when he wrote: 'Cicero observes, there is no nation so barbarous, no race so savage, as not to be firmly persuaded of the being of a God' (*Institutes*, I.iii.1). But that many peoples have possessed some ideas of God and strong beliefs in His existence without having so much as heard of Christ or the Bible is a truth incontrovertible by anyone open to persuasion by facts.

Actually, if we examine the natural theology of such men as Cicero, Seneca, and Plotinus, to say nothing of Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, we find a spirit much less proud and presumptuous than is displayed

in the unsupported affirmations and denunciations of Karl Barth, which his sincere religious motivation does not excuse. The critical methods of philosophical study are employed, by the exponents of natural theology named, in the determination to escape substituting their own ideas for reality. This is an expression of humility, not of pride. It is not even pride in any proper special theological sense, for all the men named assumed a complete dependence upon God for all knowledge. Augustine and Thomas even acknowledged human depravity and constructed their natural theology with some deference to this human disability.

(d) One of the most serious examples of epistemological confusion in recent theology occurs in the argument that the 'God' known to natural theology is only an idol having no ontological connexion with the true God who has revealed Himself to us in Christ. To support this charge two arguments are brought forth.

First, it is pointed out that the descriptions of Him arrived at through natural theology are not identical with our knowledge of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is quite true, just as Barth's writing about God is not identical—nor consistent, in some details—with Augustine's or Luther's, or even with other writing of his own. Does this mean that Augustine, Luther, and Barth have written about different deities altogether, or that Barth has called us to the worship of as many idols as would correspond to his differing utterances about God less one? Not at all. It means that Augustine, Luther, and Barth have held differing conceptions of God, none of which was identical with His very being, but all of which were by intention referring to Him, whether accurately or erroneously. Ordinarily such distinctions are well understood. When some people speak of the President of the First National Bank in Centerville, others of Mr William A. Smith, and yet others of Daniel Smith's father, we do not insist that they are talking about different persons if we know that in fact Mr William A. Smith *is* Daniel Smith's father and also President of the bank. Even if their characterizations vary greatly, we do not so insist. No more do differing accounts of the supreme Author and Ruler of the world imply various referents or one divine referent and a number of idols.

On the other hand, two accounts must have *something* in common if they are to be regarded as having the same objective referent. You and I may hear a noise at the door. I say it is only the wind, while you say there is a person knocking. A person and the wind are certainly not the same object; yet we are both speaking of the one object, cause-of-noise-at-the-door, which we interpret very differently, at least one of us being in radical error. When is the referent the same, then, and when is it not?

Barth may insist that when, as Christian theologian, he speaks of God, he is speaking of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since natural theology does not use that point of departure, its referent is not the same. Hence, despite the common use of the name 'God', natural theology and churchly theology are actually speaking of objects which are not to be ontologically identified. However, although using different points of departure and different ways of knowing, natural theology must often be speaking of the same God who is the Father known through Jesus Christ, as is evidenced by other signs of identification. Such signs are that He is the Author of the world, our own

Maker and Judge, and the Source of all good. When Barth and the natural theologian are agreed that there is only One such Being, then it is plain that both are speaking of that one same Being. The further fact that the two accounts also differ in certain respects does not disprove this identity, for, as pointed out earlier, our accounts of the same human person often differ sharply. In other words, there is much error mingled with our knowledge. This is entirely true of our churchly theology as well as of natural theology, as the conflicts and inconsistencies of churchly theologians bear witness. It would hardly be either commendable or safe to say that everyone with any mistaken idea about God was an idolater! Who would be first to cast that stone?

Are there, then, no idols? We may properly call idols those objects of supreme human regard which are actually of man's own making, not of his discovery through evidences which he has found. Wealth or fame may be such an idol, as also a carved object to which a man does obeisance—if, indeed the obeisance is done to the artifact and not to God, of whom the artifact may be a symbol. When pagan peoples infer from natural phenomena or other evidence that there exist such numerous and unworthy deities as Christians believe not to exist, these may better be referred to, as they sometimes are in the Bible and in the early Fathers, as false gods, rather than as idols. Although figments of human imagination and in that sense man's creatures, their worshippers do not regard them as of their own making—as men do regard such idols as wealth. Moreover, some beliefs about some deities of the polytheists are of such character as to suggest that those who conceive and worship them must have been touched by the spirit of the one true God, and that these largely imaginary deities represent their earnest gropings after a true understanding and worship of Him whom we know through Christ. To call all deities conceived by non-Christians or discussed in natural theology 'idols' is to lack the degree of discrimination which befits both the man of understanding and the humble man of God. Such rough and indiscriminate designation serves to express ill-concealed pride and to arouse attitudes of hostility, rather than to illuminate and clarify the distinctive character of the Christian knowledge of God.

Consider Brunner's statement:

He who believes that every revelation of God must say the same thing is preventing himself from understanding the Bible. It is the Triune God, it is true, who reveals Himself in His works in the Creation and in the Law; but He does not yet reveal Himself there as the Triune God. All Church theologians, from the earliest days down to the present time, are agreed on this point. 'For there are two different ways of working of the Son of God; the one, which becomes visible in the architecture of the world and in the natural order; the other, by means of which ruined nature is renewed and restored' (Calvin, *Works*, 47.7) (*Revelation and Reason*, p.62n.)

As a second argument, it is declared by Barth that every object of human conception is an idol (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, pp.13 and 10), for of the true God no conception is possible. Thus Barth writes:

God is not only unprovable and unsearchable, but also *inconceivable*. (*Gott ist nicht nur unbeweisbar sondern Gott ist auch unbegreiflich*.) No attempt is made in the Bible to grasp God in our concepts (*Begriffen*). In the Bible God's name is named, not as

philosophers do it, as the name of a timeless Being, surpassing the world, alien and supreme, but as the name of the living, acting, working Subject who makes Himself known (*Dogmatics in Outline*, p.38).

In the latter part of this excerpt, Barth's argument again dwells on *differences* of conception, some of which, incidentally, misrepresent many of the philosophers. In the earlier part he is claiming that the Bible makes no attempt to present definitions or conceptions of God. This is patently false, as the examination of Isaiah 40¹⁸⁻²⁰ will show. He seems also to suggest that we ought not to try to define what we mean by 'God' or to represent Him by concepts (*Begriffen*). Yet within four pages (see p.42) he is defending the propriety of the concept (*Begriff*) 'person', when properly understood, to represent each of God's 'three ways of being', and by p.44 he is pitying 'the poor folk of the Eastern Church' who, he says, 'have never quite understood the "*Spiritus, qui procedit a Patre Filioque*"'. Of course, Barth can no more write about God without employing concepts than can any other author, Christian or pagan.

The proper objective is not to *avoid* concepts, but to seek *accurate* concepts to represent faithfully the referent intended. When we are speaking of God we need to acknowledge humbly that the best of our concepts are bound to be extremely inadequate. Indeed, our best concepts are seriously inadequate to represent any concrete reality. Yet use concepts we must whenever we would speak concerning any object, even when the object is a personal subject, and even when the object is the Subject who is the Author of our being. The alternative to using concepts is an end of speaking (and writing) and likewise an end of discursive thought.

How much wiser was Calvin than Barth in this matter! When he writes about that knowledge of God claimed by Cicero for all nations and observable at times even in the most corrupt and blasphemous men, Calvin emphatically regards their knowledge as inadequate, as contradicted by their sinful actions, and as requiring special revelation by the merciful God to be made effectual in governing their lives. But he grants that it is, nevertheless, knowledge of 'God', the same God who judges them and who comes to us in Christ (see *Institutes*, I.iii.1-3).

(e) Finally, the doctrine that man is totally depraved, in such fashion that he offers no capacity, need, or 'point of contact' which can serve as a clue for natural theology, or even as object to which God addresses His revealing Word, is a gratuitous assumption. Even Calvin's doctrine of total depravity, extreme as it is, is a model of moderation and good sense by comparison. Barth purports to have drawn his doctrines from Paul's letter to the Romans and from Reformed teaching. But the classical statement of Reformed doctrine on the specific issue at hand is given by Calvin, with explicit reference to Romans 1₂₀, in the First Book of the *Institutes* (iii.1) as follows:

We lay it down as a position not to be controverted, that the human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of a Deity. For that no man might shelter himself under the pretext of ignorance, God hath given to all some apprehension of his existence, the memory of which he frequently and insensibly renews; so that, as men universally know that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, they must be

condemned by their own testimony, for not having worshipped him and consecrated their lives to his service.

This statement by Calvin does not throw light on that other problem of what is the status of religious pagans who *do* worship God and *do* consecrate their lives to His service. St Paul does at least suggest an answer when he writes in his Letter to the Romans:

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus (2₁₄₋₁₆).

Yet, while Calvin may hesitate to go all the way with Paul, he nevertheless is clear as to man's capacity (or 'natural instinct') to know that God is his Maker.

There is here no question regarding the powers of man alone. 'Man alone' is a fiction especially absurd in the discussions of theologians who believe that man exists by the grace of God and is always in His presence. Of course 'man alone' cannot construct a natural theology, since 'man alone' cannot even exist. On the other hand, man as he is empowered by the grace of God and surrounded by evidence of 'his eternal power and deity' (Rom. 1₂₀), plainly can and does construct natural theologies true as far as they go. To say that this is impossible is an unwarranted assumption, opposed by the facts of human history, the teaching of the Old and New Testaments, and the testimony of that very Reformed tradition to which Barth professes commitment.

IV. POSITIVE USEFULNESS OF NATURAL THEOLOGY TO THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN

In defending his right to give the Gifford Lectures, despite his rejection of all natural theology, Barth makes the claim that natural theology soon becomes 'arid and listless' when it is not in 'conflict' with its 'adversary' which stands in 'clear antithesis' to it—namely, 'the teaching of the Reformation' (*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, pp. 6-7, 9). He says this dependence of natural theology on opposition by a revealed theology which absolutely rejects it is 'notorious' (ibid., p.7), but he does not cite a shred of evidence. Actually, the natural theology of the Stoics was ably constructed without such opposition and still retains sufficient vitality to exert considerable influence on law and international affairs, as well as on philosophical and theological theory, especially through its concept of natural law. The natural theology of Thomas Aquinas and of many writers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries flourished with the encouragement, rather than opposition, of most theologians with whom these writers were much concerned.

That natural theology is radically inadequate soil for the nurture of a living, redemptive faith would be cheerfully admitted, or rather emphatically asserted, by most of its Christian participants. But it is quite another thing to say that natural theology owes its vitality to opposition by theologians who attack it. This is not only unsupported by the evidence but is disproved by the history of natural theology.

On the other hand, Christian theology needs the services of natural theology for several purposes. These can be given here only in brief.

(1) A part of the total task of Christian theology is to determine the kind of relations which subsist between Christian doctrines and all else that we know. The fulfilment of this purpose requires inevitably that questions of natural theology be raised, such as these: What evidences of God's existence and of His nature are to be found in the world? In what ways does man's need of God appear in human nature? A Christian theology which does not include the confronting of such questions has not yet taken seriously the effort to attain the wholeness of view required by the commandment to Love God with all the mind. Barth, too, takes such questions seriously, but he argues that the answer to them would be wholly negative. The point is that such questions must be earnestly confronted, and if some positive lines of evidence are found to lead from man and the world to God, it is an obligation of the Christian theologian to explore these connexions with care. To do so is to study natural theology in the fifth (Temple's) sense at least, and probably in the first and second also.

(2) Natural theology serves to correct some of the errors produced by an exclusively biblical or by a biblical and traditional theology. For example, Calvin was assisted by the natural theology of Cicero and others toward giving due emphasis to the first two chapters of Romans and putting in proper perspective St Paul's other teachings stressing our dependence in revelation and divine grace. On the other hand, Barth's own theology has in other ways obviously gained considerably over Calvin's by more recent developments based on presuppositions of natural theology. For example, Barth is not bound by any such rigid doctrine of biblical inerrancy as restricted Calvin. This, of course, is due to the advances of textual and historical criticism. Barth takes these critical studies into account only spasmodically, yet they have given his use of the Bible much more flexibility than Calvin knew. But textual and historical criticism grew out of altogether secular literary and historical scholarship, and are based on the assumption that there is continuity between the biblical revelation and the rest of human history. Every time we use historical criticism in our study of the Bible, we are learning something about God's Word to man from historical knowledge gained from sources independent of the biblical revelation. Biblical theology which makes use of historical criticism, then, implies the positive usefulness of natural theology, particularly in the fifth (Temple's) sense.

To use another example, we may point out that the thought of the Church has been stimulated, challenged, and modified for good, in recent times, by secular movements of thought. Reinhold Niebuhr, John C. Bennett, Walter G. Muelder, and other students of Christian social ethics, have often pointed out examples of such contributions from non-Christian and even anti-Christian thought. To recognize such contributions is to imply acknowledgement of indebtedness to natural theology. For it is the gaining of 'truth about God or about man's rightful destiny' from 'considerations logically independent of the biblical revelation and of a prior commitment to the Christian faith'. (Cf. last paragraph under 'I. Definitions', above. The *kinds* of natural theology most relevant here are those specified by definitions two and five.)

(3) Natural theology provides a bridge for communication and intellectual co-operation of Christian theology with the natural and social sciences. Where Christian theology is taught as part of a university curriculum, it can scarcely

participate in the common intellectual life of the university without accepting the services of natural theology. A department of Christian theology in which natural theology is opposed can issue pronouncements and its members can as individuals participate in scientific activities; but can it participate in co-operative truth-seeking efforts with the sciences? Universities and our whole culture are already suffering badly from the disunity of intellectual fragmentation. Christian theology can be of important assistance in healing this condition, but only when it approaches other disciplines with a willingness to learn from them concerning its own subject matter, as well as to teach them important insights concerning their subject matter. To engage in this kind of co-operative intellectual task, with psychology, sociology, history, medical science, economics, political science, biology and the physical sciences is to accept the services of natural theology. All the five types of natural theology are useful in this task.

(4) In some aspects of human life, if the practical as well as the intellectual purposes of Christian theology are to be achieved, its participants must engage in certain common tasks with persons who stand outside the Christian faith. A common platform for such co-operation, e.g. in the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, is to be found in that division of natural theology (definitions two and five) concerned with natural law. The work of such men as Dr Frederick Nolde suggests what can be done by men with Christian faith clarified by theological study and with willingness to enter wholeheartedly into discussion of current international issues on the basis of humanly discoverable natural law. A Christian theology which includes the conviction that all natural theology must be rejected is cut off from effective participation in such important Christian ministries of conciliation and understanding.

(5) In the communication of Christian faith—and Christian theology—to unbelievers, natural theology (all five types) is so valuable as to be well nigh indispensable. While studying and otherwise assisting theological education in Central and East Africa in 1955-6, the writer asked many articulate first-generation Christians what had motivated their turning from paganism to Christian faith. Invariably, an important part of the answer implied the truth of natural theology. These young Christians told me that the Christian message showed them clearly what they had long dimly understood—the kind of life they ought to live, with faith in one supreme God. The Christian faith declared to them the God already dimly sensed but yet not well known, and enabled them to live a life in fulfilment of moral needs long felt but inarticulate and ineffectual. In evangelistic approach to Communists here in the United States, I have found a similar necessity to meet the unbeliever on a common ground of secular thought and universal and human need. Philosophical criticism of Marxism and a positive arguing of natural theology must be used until the unbeliever is persuaded that it is reasonable to look for a solution of his most perplexing theoretical and practical problems in a theistic faith. Until he is so persuaded, all citations of Biblical and churchly authority only confirm him in his assurance that the Christian faith is an outmoded, pre-scientific superstition. Natural theology is no less valuable for the evangelistic Christian world mission today than when Justin Martyr wrote his apology or when Augustine was led through Platonism to Christ.

So valuable an ally deserves a better reputation with Christian theologians than Barth and some others would give it, unless better reasons can be adduced against it than have thus far come to light.

L. HAROLD DEWOLF

SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS TO THEOLOGY

WHEN a science professor is to speak to a Theological Conference, he may well wonder with what justification he should say anything at all. For my own part I recall—as my justification—that some years ago one of the cheaper national newspapers did me the honour of reporting a few sentences from an address of mine: this was placed in their ‘Quote of the Day’, at a time when I was professor of Theoretical Physics at London University. They referred to me then as ‘Professor of Theological Physics’!

This is, of course, all a bit ridiculous. Yet perhaps in a world so under domination by science and its ways of thinking, there is something to be said, from time to time, in favour of getting a professional scientist to speak in non-technical terms of some of the recent developments about which he knows. Knowledge of this kind is the necessary preliminary to the sort of sure comment which Christians may, and should, provide. We are not to think of ‘proving’ the Christian faith by a policy of this kind—nor, of course, of disproving it. But there should be some overlap between the two spheres of thought, and the Church will certainly miss some of the opportunities which a period like the twentieth century offers it if it forgets the saying of Dr Hort—‘God will never be fully known until He is known within an understood order of nature’. Physics is physics, without the need for any adjectival qualification. One may not properly call it ‘theological’, but the London newspaper’s error need not be so serious as some theologians might suppose.

I propose to remind you of two or three of the places in which science has sometimes been held to disagree with Christian theology. I want to say what I believe any current up-to-date scientist would say on each of these issues. This will inevitably lead us to some consideration of the status of scientific thinking within the total field of human thought. This status is much misunderstood, both inside and outside the Christian community.

People of my generation were brought up to believe in the inevitability of a conflict between the new science and the old religion. Yet we scarcely need to remind ourselves that it was not always thus. The experimental method, on which all science rests, began in Oxford in the thirteenth century. Round about 1320 our first Chancellor—Robert Greathead, one of the early Franciscans—maintained in his lectures and his sermons that if you wanted to understand God, you needed the language of geometry (today I suppose it would be theoretical physics!). His more famous pupil, Roger Bacon, also a Franciscan, wrote his *Opus Maius* to prove that science could be a best friend of the Church, and aid it in the business of evangelizing mankind. Oxford was not unique in this. St Thomas Aquinas, at about the same time, maintained that the more you knew about the world God made, the more you knew about God, since 'He had impressed a certain image of Himself' upon it.

Such a point of view continued for many centuries. Let me put another Oxford illustration. Most people know of our Royal Society. It was the first—and, as we like to think, still the most distinguished scientific society in the world. It grew from the confluence of two streams. One was in London, the other was here at Wadham College, under the influence of its warden, John Wilkins, later to become Bishop of Chester. But prominent among its earliest members were Christopher Wren, Professor of Astronomy in Oxford, and architect of London after the Great Fire of 1666, unwillingly at the command of King Charles; and there was Robert Boyle the chemist, still remembered by every schoolboy for 'Boyle's Law', yet so devout a churchman that, although he wanted to take Orders, he felt himself unworthy and turned to chemistry instead! Then there was Isaac Newton, probably the greatest scientist of all time. He maintained that his theological studies were the most important of all his work (though perhaps those who have looked at his exegesis of the Book of Daniel might not always agree with his judgement here!). The list could be continued very easily: Thomas Sprat, the rector of one of the leading City churches; Seth Ward, Bishop of Salisbury, and John Ray, the founder of systematic zoology and botany. His great book, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* exercised a profound influence in its day. He spoke of Science as a 'proper study for a Sabbath Day', and the book itself, in a slightly expurgated form, was later used by John Wesley in training his travelling preachers.

If all this means anything at all, it means that science grew up in a Christian milieu. William Temple once said that science would not develop in a place where the 'ruling principle of the universe' was supposed to be either 'capricious or hostile'. This may be an exaggeration, but at any rate this was how it did happen over the years.

But we must come to the conflicts. In Britain these came later than in some other places, but the nineteenth century saw them assume significant size. And the irony is that many of them took public shape in the one place where this should not have happened—the British Association. The B.A. was founded in 1831 almost entirely through the efforts of Churchmen. Its avowed intention was to make the new discoveries of science available and understood by the layman, and for that reason it held its meetings each year in a different place, gaining for its members the descriptive epithet of 'peripatetic philosophers'. The proposal to establish it was made by Vernon Harcourt, a distinguished

physical chemist who was interested in the rate at which a chemical reaction proceeds. In his opening speech he maintained that 'true science and true religion ever serve the same great end—the glory and worship of our common Lord'. He was in Holy Orders, and so also were two of its first three presidents. Yet it was among this group that the conflict was most noticeable. Even at the date of its foundation there were rumours—rumblings of discord. Some fifty years earlier Hutton had begun seriously to study the fossils, and therefrom to estimate a likely age for the earth. His pupil, Playfair, had not long been dead when the B.A. was established. Their estimates of the age of the earth began to make Archbishop Ussher's arithmetic look a little pale. Was the Bible trustworthy? Certainly Newton—and all others of his generation—had believed that Creation had taken place in one great burst of divine activity in the year 4004 B.C. But scientists of the early nineteenth century had come to disagree with Newton here; why should they trust any part of a book now shown to be seriously in error? (It is, of course, true that at that time they did not know by how much the Archbishop was wrong. In a jocular way it could be said that the age of the earth has been steadily increasing from that day until now, when it is to be measured in thousands of millions of years.) This point of view was argued vehemently at several meetings of the B.A.

This debate was followed by a second one—evolution. Here in Oxford this has a special relevance, since no other public debate on the relation between science and religion has ever had the effect of one held in the Museum, only a hundred yards from my own office, during the 1859 meeting of the British Association. You will find a plaque upon the wall recording that it was in this building that Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford engaged in controversy with T. H. Huxley. Surely this must count as one of the most unhappy episodes in all this conflict. For the Bishop, though undoubtedly a clever man, was no scientist. He was advised by Owen, one of Darwin's rival scientists, a disbeliever in the theory of evolution himself, and a man very willing to let some of his own bitterness flow from the Bishop's lips. Darwin himself was a recluse, and never came to public meetings. But his great warrior, the indomitable, square-faced Thomas Henry Huxley, was there in his place. The result was a catastrophe. For the position taken up by the Bishop, and therefore widely regarded as the true Christian position, was shattered into bits. 'The Lord', said Huxley at one moment, slapping his thigh in pleasure, 'hath delivered him into my hands.'

This debate on the theory of evolution was inevitably followed by a third debate—on free will and determinism. *Man's Place in Nature* was the title of a book of essays by T. H. Huxley, and *The Descent of Man* of a book by Charles Darwin. Man, it seemed, was but part of the animal world; he was to be interpreted in terms of the genes, the hormones, the glandular secretions which gave him no option about himself. His thought, his creative imaginative life, his sense of freedom were illusory—the atoms and electrons of which he was essentially composed, would take care of that. Centuries before all this Democritus had said that after the atoms there was nothing left but a void. His words seemed to fit the mood of a generation that was just rediscovering the atom. So any cross-current, or entrenched interest, which delayed or obscured the understanding of the atom, or dared to question the supremacy of this kind of thinking, was to be rejected out of hand. And the prophets of the new age, like

H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, wrote letters to each other, to the effect that 'all religion, of every sort, is dead'.

I have just described three of the fundamental clashes in the science-religion controversy. But before we leave them as mere history, I think it is desirable that we should take them up once more, and look again at them. What would a professional scientist, *qua* scientist, have to say about them in the century which followed the original discussion? Have those first skirmishes become a rout, or are there second thoughts on both sides?

First, then, there is the age of the earth. This is a topic that has been much studied in recent years. For the earth is relatively accessible. We can measure its temperature, and learn how this changes as we go either to great heights above the earth's surface or to great depths below it. We can detect the radioactive changes that go on in the earth's crust, and work backwards to the stage at which these began. We can study the rate at which certain natural deposits occur, and in a dozen or more different ways we can make estimates of the age of the earth itself. One quite extraordinary fact emerges—these various estimates, quite independent of each other, hardly differ significantly the one from the other. It is hard not to put some trust in concordance of this kind. If you deny it, or even seriously doubt it, you are refusing to accept the whole basis on which scientific truth rests. No one—it seems to me—has any right seriously to deny that, according to the best knowledge that we have, the age of the earth is close to 4,000 million years. It may be a bit more, but seems unlikely to be much less. No doubt in a few years time we shall be able to make the figure a little more definite—perhaps add another decimal point. It is of course conceivable that something really fundamental has been left out of our calculations, but the close agreement of so many different approaches makes this possibility rather remote. We had better come to terms with the rather frightening figure that I have quoted. By the side of this huge figure, the length of human life is almost frighteningly small. It is most unlikely that our human ancestors roamed the forests and the swamps more than a million years ago. By comparison with all the ages before human life began, the years since would count as two seconds from a whole day.

Here is a problem which puzzles some people now, as it puzzled the scientists and the Christians of 120 years ago. I mention it now because only a week ago I had the opportunity of engaging in discussion on this very topic with a group of Russian visitors. I was telling them about our Christian faith, and was trying to urge its reasonableness in the light of scientific discovery. One of them turned to me, and he said—without knowing anything of St Augustine and his famous query about what God was doing before He created human beings—'If you say that the earth is so old, and man is so young, what am I to think of your God? Wasn't He wasting His time through all those long years of waiting for the birth of man—real man?' Now, this is a theological issue. For my own part, I take great comfort from the story of Creation and the fact that at the end of each of the first five days of Creation God looked at His work and saw that it was good. It comes to this—that a view of God totally linked with man is not good enough to interpret these long years. Only in one sense were they years of waiting; ages before there were men to take note of its beauty, the sun had set and the moon had waxed and waned, the blossom had been white and cherry

pink. Even the rainbow was a sign of God's concern for His world long before human sin had led to the great Flood. I fancy that here our Christian faith should be at some advantage over at least some of its rivals. For that approving look of God at the evening of those first days is a sign to us that God values the physical order, and not only the human beings which belong to it. The physical universe is not just a stage on which man's little act is played; it is part of the theatre God built with His own hands. In this sense God did not come in Christ to an alien and unfriendly universe. We do not fully understand the Incarnation till we see it as validating scientific inquiry in this way.

So the situation now is vastly different from what it was. We do not worry now, as our grandfathers did, about the significance of the Old Testament as a source-book of scientific truth. And having been saved from this totally unnecessary worry, we are free in a more positive sense to see how the newer discoveries—of an earth 3,000-4,000 million years old, and a universe perhaps twice as old—throw light on the grandeur and majesty of Him who conceived them in the first place. Here, as on other occasions, freedom from an unnecessary worry leads to an enrichment of our total awareness.

But before leaving this matter there are two conclusions that I want to mention. The first is the very remarkable discovery—if one really thinks about it—that this whole enormous universe is a *uni*-verse; that is, that its constituent parts, the atoms of oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, etc., are to be found in roughly the same proportions everywhere throughout it, and that their behaviour is characterized by the same laws here on our earth as in the remotest part of this great panorama. There is a distinctive longing for wholeness in the human mind. Some regard it as evidence for God as the Being who can alone unite man's varied hopes. The fact that now, at the physical level of inquiry, this wholeness seems to have been established seems to me further evidence. But, of course, it is not proof.

The other matter is the recognition that quite possibly our earth is not unique. This is in quite direct opposition to older views. It used to be supposed that a planetary system such as ours could only be the product of the near-collision of two stars wandering at random through the icy void. But this is not so now, and today no respectable astrophysicist would entertain such an idea even for a moment. Indeed, it is now widely believed that planetary systems are very frequently associated with stars (e.g. our sun). It may easily turn out that in our own little corner of space—our galaxy, or island universe—there are a million such planetary systems. And we should remember that our island universe is repeated 1,000 million times or more in the rest of space. It would be extremely odd if, in a universe of the character I have just described, there were not some of those millions of possible earths in which the conditions for human life were to be found. By conditions for human life I mean the temperature—not so hot that blood boils, or so cold that it freezes—and the moisture, and an atmosphere of oxygen and similar things. It is true that there is no oxygen on any of the other planets in our own solar system (so far as we know), and most of them are far too cold for our kind of human life. But that does not prevent such conditions being found elsewhere, on other planetary systems, where there may be planets at distances from their sun corresponding to our distance from our sun. We do not know for sure, but it seems highly probable that all the necessary

physical conditions for life exist elsewhere in our great universe. This does not mean that life must also be found there, though expert biologists have given reasons for believing that if the physical conditions are right, and if the necessary atoms are available, then eventually life will arise. Some people, such as Professor Darlington, are prepared to go even further than this, and suggest that in such a case protein would be formed similar to the protein in our own bodies, and that, in the course of time, it is not impossible that we should find creatures with a stage of evolution corresponding closely to ours. Certainly the creation of protein now seems far easier than we once imagined it to be. I can remember reading, some years ago, the calculations of Pierre du Nouy, who tried to estimate the possibility that the correct number of atoms of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen, rushing about in a kind of random chase, would happen to bump into each other, and stick together to form the first protein molecule. The answer that he got was fantastically small—a conclusion which led some apologists to claim that this was direct evidence of the hand of God. Such inferences are always dangerous, and to be avoided. For certain recent experiments have shown that if you take a cylinder, and fill it with ammonia, methane and carbon dioxide, and if you then pass a single electric spark through it, you will find that even with this simple mixture you have synthesized some of the essential precursors of a protein. We need to be very careful before we use arguments of this kind in defence of the Christian position. God must be seen in the known, and not just as the unknown. I regret that so much use of this idea of God altering the normal way of things has been made in recent years. It is in danger of denying that God is in the ordinary things of this world; and surely that is one of the truths set out for us in the first few chapters of Genesis.

If there really are 'human' beings on some of these other 'earths', we shall meet some very pretty theological issues. How are we to communicate the gospel to them? We have radio waves as our sole mode of physical communication. But these are slow (relative to the great distances involved), and communication is at best rather sporadic if it takes a few thousand years to receive the reply to any question that we ask of the distant stars. Or there may be some form of revelation appropriate to their condition, just as the revelation in Christ is appropriate to ours. We do not know and can scarcely guess, but it is a theological issue, and its dawn is solely the result of modern scientific discovery. What a long way we have travelled from the early form in which this debate about the age of the earth took place!

This leads on to the second of the three great debates which I am here discussing—the theory of evolution. I think it is fair to say about this debate, as was said about the age of the earth, that most of the heat of argument is over, and tempers are cooled. Yet we do well to remember that it was as late as 1925, less than thirty-five years ago, that there took place in Dayton, U.S.A., the famous Scopes trial, with its verdict that the theory of evolution might not be taught by a school biology teacher, because it was contrary to Holy Writ! But just as with the geologists, so now with the biologists—they are more restrained in the claims that they make. Thus in the most recent British book of any seriousness concerned with this problem, the author states that he is forced to accept the theory, *faute de mieux*. There is no rival theory with anything like the comprehensiveness of this theory, different as it is now from the first form in

which Charles Darwin and Russell Wallace put it forward. There are several serious problems connected with it which have not yet been solved, so that, although I personally believe in the theory, I have to admit that all is not clear and straightforward.

Let me mention one of these unresolved problems to show what I mean. We believe with some confidence that the changes which take place in living matter and which reveal themselves as evolutionary and inherited, are dominated by changes in one or more of our genes. The genes—of which we have some 40,000 or 50,000 in each cell—are the carriers of our hereditary characteristics. Under suitable circumstances, such as radiation, or heat, or the action of certain chemicals (e.g. mustard gas), one or more of these genes can be changed, or mutated. Thus the colour of the eyes, or the hair, might be changed; or the resistance to disease could be diminished. These mutations are quite random, and unpredictable in detail. For example, if the chair in which Queen Victoria was doing her knitting had been shifted one-thousandth of an inch away from its position at one strategic moment, one of her chromosomes would not have been hit by a bullet of cosmic radiation, and the Spanish royal family would not have suffered from the troublesome disease of haemophilia. The incident may be fanciful, but such a mutation did take place, and its effects will dog that issue for a very long time. These mutations, then, are the basic method whereby evolution takes place. But here is the difficulty—our human bodies are so astonishingly complex that they must have required thousands (probably millions) of mutations to bring them to their present condition. Some of these, such as those that led to the development of the eye, are not immediately useful, and they only acquired survival value when supplemented by other subsequent mutations. There simply hasn't been long enough for all these mutations to occur. We can soon see this if we realize that the human race has been in existence for about a million years. If we take twenty years for one generation this involved 50,000 generations. This is nothing like enough for the changes that are needed, since we have no reason to suppose that a new valuable mutation occurs more than once in many generations. In olden times the situation was less favourable than now, for there were far fewer people alive. (It is a sobering thought that if you were to add together all the human beings that have ever lived on this earth, you would find that one in twenty-one of them all was alive today!) So we should have expected a very vast length of time for the evolving of the human race. But in fact there are some grounds for the belief that most of the later changes have taken place in the last 10,000 years. Some geneticists are being driven to talk about co-operative mutations in which one mutation is supposed to make the next mutation easier. This is dangerously near a view of some kind of *élan vitale*, or teleological interpretation of biological study. It is therefore anathema to most biologists (and if they *could* remain strictly biologists, rightly so). We are therefore left in an impasse. We believe in evolution although there really doesn't seem to have been time enough for it to operate. There is a great temptation here for the theologian to convert what is essentially a biological problem into a theological one; and it must be resisted. We shall do no good if we come rushing up to the biologist in order to tell him cheerfully that he need not worry about this time scale, since it is really only an indication that God was directing the process, and therefore we don't require

the conventional period of years. If we chatter like that, we must not be surprised if he replies by asking us who would be thought responsible for conventional time periods in biology. There is no answer—God must be seen in the known, the understood, the 'conventional', and not merely in the unconventional which we cannot otherwise understand. And if the biologist can put his questions about evolution in scientific terms, then it must ultimately be in scientific terms that they get their answer. Otherwise it is no answer, the scientist is rejected, and the product of the human mind which God made is being treated as irrelevant to the understanding of God. Here again our Christian belief in the Incarnation should save us. There is value in what the biologist, *qua* biologist, has to tell us about evolution. There is also value in what the writer of Genesis and all those others who in later years have struggled to reveal God's purpose in the world of living things have said. But the purpose of evolution is not to be identified with the mechanism. The cobbler had better stick to his last.

We have now come to the third of my great debates. I posed this in the form of a query: could man be explained solely in terms of his chemical and biological structure? Is his sense of freedom—free will—entirely illusory, a suitable study for the psychologist? Do the facts of science give it such authority of explanation and objectivity that all things subjective have become trivial and without ultimate significance? 'Science', wrote Sigmund Freud at the end of his book on religion, *The Future of an Illusion*, 'is no illusion. But it would be an illusion to suppose that we could get anywhere else what science cannot give us.' That was the way of the late Victorian era with its exuberant self-confidence, and the first Edwardian era with its ignorance of tragedy. It is not the way of the modern scientist. He is more humble now. He ought always to have been humble. For the beginnings of science were associated with the recognition that much of what happens in this world is quite beyond our powers of comprehension. Science began because it learnt how to ask easy questions and was not ashamed to confess its ignorance of more difficult ones. 'The cause of gravity', said Newton, 'I do not pretend to know.' Suffice it for him to study not its cause, but its laws. The 'cause' could perhaps be a theological issue; but if so, it must not be allowed to interrupt his study of the behaviour of solid bodies, whether they were apples in his father's orchard in Lincolnshire, or pebbles falling from the top of Pisa's tower, or planets circling the sun. About the 'cause' of these he could be agnostic. This is the interpretation of his famous *hypotheses non fingo*. But this tradition of humility changed during the nineteenth century. It was partly associated with the popularization of science, so that it was not surprising that so many of the great public debates took place at meetings of the British Association. Even the word 'scientist' is a recent one. The word 'science' is very old, reaching back to Plato and the Greeks; but the word 'scientist' dates only from 1840, the year in which Whewell became President of the British Association, as well as being Master of Trinity, Cambridge. He wanted a word to describe the new species of men—the professionals—who were now doing science, and so he called them scientists. I am sure that it is not accidental that this corresponded with the burst of conceit which infested much popular development and exposition of science. 'Give me matter and motion', said one famous scientist, 'and I'll construct the universe.' Now, matter and motion are

not unimportant constituents of our universe. But few of us would wish all other ingredients to be brusquely excluded. Here is another paragon of modesty: 'Just as the bile is a secretion of the liver, so is the mind a secretion of the brain'—with its inference that everything mental is merely the conduct and result of certain glandular activity, that everything which charms and delights us, whether poetry or love, is as mechanical as the contents of a watch, but presumably without the justification for its existence which is necessary in a watch. It seemed in those days, when professional science was growing, that the whole world was swimming into its net, and that therefore there was no need for any other interpretation. Perhaps this sin of pride was partly the explanation of the violence with which the scientist sometimes tried to smash his opponents; and the debate with Christianity grew most bitter.

But now it is quite different. The modern scientist would hesitate to say anything about free will. He would point out that this was a concept used to co-ordinate the description of the activities of a person. The awareness of free will was personal, entirely incommunicable by direct means to anyone else. It was part of an actor-view of the universe, and it did not, therefore, figure in his scheme of concepts and ideas. He would study atoms and molecules, and he would observe their chemical behaviour. He might even describe the internal working of a body, and eventually be able to trace the set of electrical impulses associated with touch, or sight, from the organ of reception right to the brain; he might ultimately hope to follow these little impulses as they divided themselves among the many tiny electrical circuits of the brain. But this is not a description of touch, or sight; it is a description of the mechanism of touch or sight—which is a very different thing. Free will is not discredited because a scientist says that it does not correspond with any of the concepts which he finds useful in his own work. It could indeed be argued that it would be much more serious if it did!

I wrote a few pages earlier of the sense in which a biologist *qua* biologist might have nothing to say about the teleology involved in an evolutionary scheme, and of the inability of a scientist *qua* scientist to deny or confirm the validity of the concept of free will. But of course a scientist is never nothing but a scientist. He is a human being, who eats a breakfast which may or may not agree with him; he has children, who may or may not be well behaved. The questions that are posed by situations of this kind must be settled outside the range of his pure scientific thinking. If we recognize this, we are saved from wasting time on what Max Planck, the distinguished German theoretical physicist, used to call 'phantom problems'. The conflict between free will and determinism is really no problem at all; it appears to be a problem only because we mix our fields of thinking. Thus free will is associated with my response to given situations. If I am a human being, I am myself aware of having to decide things. People who are not aware of this are usually put in mad-houses, since awareness of decision is one of the criteria by which we decide whether or not a person is really human. No kind of physical, or chemical, theory could conceivably take away from me this sense of decision of free will. But equally well I cannot share my free will with you (except perhaps in circumstances of exceedingly close human relationships, such as a lover and his beloved, or even, more rarely, within the fellowship of the Christian community). If I describe it, you

may understand my description; you will not know my anguish as I try to make up my mind. And even if, after the event, you become a psychologist and try to tell me why I decided in the way I did, that is only a *post-factum* account; it is certainly not the experience of free will. If, in your self-confidence, you should dare to tell me beforehand what I shall decide, I know that, whatever you may say, I am free to do just the opposite. And rightly feeling that you have affronted my dignity as a human being (or child of God), I am very likely to 'prove you wrong'.

There is all the difference in the world between the actor, experiencing in his own self the tumult of decision and anxiety, and the spectator, noticing behaviour, studying the feelings associated with it, and building therefrom an account of me which he calls deterministic. You would need tremendous and detailed knowledge of me if you were to succeed in this deterministic account. But in principle I believe it could be achieved, within limits. Observed from within, the will is free; observed from without, it is determined.

We must now turn to some general considerations about science. Some of them are already involved in our preceding discussion. What really is the status of science? This question is not concerned with technology, whether in the making of gadgets or the exploitation of the ideas and discoveries of science. It is concerned with the claims which a scientist may rightly make for his work. These are quite different now from what they were often supposed to be fifty years or more ago. For then the scientist would have said that he was describing reality; he alone was showing us things as they really are, 'things-in-themselves'—if we may use Kant's phrase. Today, however, he would be more modest. It is true that he would claim to take into his analysis the whole world of human experience—and this means the sense data that we receive, the things that happen to us, the things that we encounter mentally or physically, the world which I see as it meets me, or which I myself go out to meet, the totality of human experience. Nothing less than this belongs to the field of inquiry of the scientist. There is no tree the fruit whereof he must not eat. But what he does with this vast sum of material is not to claim that it reveals things as they fundamentally are; he seeks more modestly to build out of it a pattern. To establish this pattern we select, often with painful simplicity, such elementary situations as lend themselves to a simplifying process. But as our subject develops, the pattern becomes more comprehensive. We only ask of the pattern that it shall be coherent (i.e. have no internal inconsistencies) and meaningful, and capable of growing. We desire also that it shall be attractive, and we believe that for scientific purposes we achieve the pattern by a process of abstraction and generality, and we express it by what is essentially a kind of symbolism.

But these last few sentences deserve—and need—some elaboration. First, the facts. I was brought up to believe that facts alone mattered to the scientist. Let the artist, the poet, the man of religion continue on his way in blissful ignorance of facts. The scientist at any rate knows the solid ground on which his feet are placed. But this is a grievous half-truth. What, for example, could be less interesting—more deadly dull—than a bare fact? If a workman repairing the wall of Lincoln College happens to drop a small brick, it will take a certain number of seconds to reach the ground. How dull! It could be of absolutely no importance unless—as happened to me yesterday on my way to a conference

—I was underneath its line of falling. A stone dropped by Galileo from the Leaning Tower of Pisa takes longer to reach the ground than the Oxford brick, or Newton's famous apple in his Lincolnshire family's home. But that is not science. Science is what we ourselves make of those facts. Someone must breathe the spirit into the bare bones if they are to live. This breath of the spirit is science. There is no sure way of it. Newton could say that no scientific discovery was ever made without a leap of the imagination, and Einstein echoes the thought by asserting that there is absolutely no way by which, starting with the bare facts of observation, you can with certainty pass to the theory which binds them together. Max Planck, who shares with Einstein a very large part of the responsibility for initiating modern physics, wrote of science that it was a creative work of art, for new ideas, he said, are not obtained by any logical deductive process, but by a creative imagination. T. H. Huxley, of whose part in one of the great debates I have already spoken, once uttered these words: 'It is a popular belief that the scientist is under obligation not to go beyond the facts of the case. But those who know are aware that a man who never goes beyond the facts seldom gets even as far as that.' And Pasteur said: 'If you tell me that in talking like this I am going beyond the facts, I shall reply that that is my way of looking at things.'

How different this is from the older view! And how silly it makes much of our recent controversy about the rights and wrongs of a scientific or a humanistic education! If we could come to see science as it is, and not as it used to be thought to be, we should not be afraid of it. The true humanist, said George Surton the historian, should study the life of science as he studies the life of art and history. One of the keys to the understanding of science by the layman ought to be its kinship with the arts. When Professor Dirac of Cambridge, Nobel Prize-winner for his work on the quantum theory, began a course of lectures at the Institute of Advanced Study in Dublin a few years ago, he started with these words: 'The theory which I am going to describe, if it is to be acceptable, must be both neat and beautiful.' This conviction that the universe is mediated to us in terms of pattern, and of beauty, finds expression most clearly of all in the startling work of the modern theoretical physicist. I have recently been thinking about some of the greatest discoveries in this field—such as the theory of relativity, the positive electron, and the Pauli principle for the behaviour of electrons in atoms and molecules—all of them are based essentially on symmetry. This belief in symmetry has been the guiding principle in almost all the work of this kind. Yet far from being unscientific, it has 'delivered the goods', and changed the very world in which we all live. Simone Weil could say that the beautiful was evidence for God. If this is so, the theologian, so far from fighting shy of science, should rejoice in its development.

But there is more to it than this. If beauty and some sense of value play so central a part, then clearly the personal element in science is more significant than we used to suppose. A moment's thought will show that this is indeed true. Among all the thousands of scientists I know, I've never met one who did an experiment just for the fun of it. He did it because he himself had a hunch that it was worth doing. Sir Charles Darwin once said that just once in your life you ought to do 'a damn-fool experiment' (so he blew a trumpet at some tulips!). The very fact that he could write like this is evidence for the sense

of personal conviction, personal hope, personal involvement that beset him round. It was a scientist of great distinction, Professor Polanyi, who entitled his recent Gifford Lectures *Personal Knowledge*. It is because there are human beings, with human frailties and human imagination, that science is possible. In this sense science is deeply personal. The scientist may have his feet firmly grounded on the solid earth, where the dull meaningless acts are to be gathered up; but his head is among the clouds.

If we can come to accept this personal character in science, then we shall come to see also its essential humility. The astronomer Pepler may have been right to fall on his knees in an ecstasy of wonder, praising God that he could think God's thoughts after Him; but these thoughts come through human minds, with human limitations. There is an austerity and a grandeur in science of which our generation has every reason to be proud. But the vessel in which this grandeur rests is an earthen vessel. None of us has any right ever to suppose that his work is final, or that it proves anything at all; for there is always that which J. R. Oppenheimer calls the 'element of unexpected novelty' about things. It is one of the paradoxes that though the great scientific developments of the last fifty years represent a tremendous success, and a mental achievements that is at least the equal of the magical 250 years of Ancient Greece, yet they have, and must always have, about them the character of an unfinished story. Even the elements in this story have a kind of make-believe about them. For the scientist, having abandoned the impossible attempt to know things-as-they-are, now recognizes that he speaks in symbols. These symbols are the concepts by which he builds his meaningful coherent pattern. They are symbols and not materialistic truth, because it is their function to mediate truth to us. This they do in so far as their behaviour corresponds with what we observe. I have myself spent some thirty years studying the electron, and have written many articles and books about it. I realize its importance in understanding the telephone, the electric light switch and the TV tube. It is a central concept in modern physics. But I do not know whether there really is an electron! Yet in some strange sense, as I grapple with it, write down its equations and study its behaviour in different circumstances, it seems as if I am grappling not with a difficult concept which is in danger of becoming too unruly for me, but with some reality, deeper and more lasting than my concept, yet mediated to me in deeply personal terms by concepts just like this. I cannot hope to describe this reality any more than the artist can force his brush to put on to the canvas the reality with which he grapples. We accept this for the artist, why should we hesitate for the scientist?

These changes in our understanding of science and the claims that we make for it ought to encourage us, for they show that science is indeed one of the languages in which God is to be described—incomplete and needing the support which other languages can give. It was Werner Heisenberg, the most distinguished living German physicist, who wrote, in a book published last year, that 'modern science is a specifically Christian form of Godlessness'. He was thinking of the imagination, the rigour and discipline of thought which are needed, the value judgements as to what is beautiful and satisfying, the aesthetic, artistic, even spiritual quality in science. And his words should give us pause. For they show us that in this curious transforming power we have something not utterly alien, nor of which we should feel afraid. There will be puzzles; there will be

great debates in our time similar to those three of which I spoke earlier. This means that we need to think, and to think charitably and imaginatively. Theologians have not always played fair with science, nor have scientists always played fair with theology. But there is a new spirit abroad today. And if we really believe that the psalmist was right to cry that the 'earth is the Lord's, and all they that dwell therein', then we may even come to the place where we see that the scientist may be one of the messengers of God.

CHARLES A. COULSON

PREVENIENT GRACE

IT MAY seem somewhat courageous of me to mingle my voice with well-trimmed systematic theologians, as my field is mainly practical theology—pastoral psychology and counselling. Nevertheless I take courage to do it for at least two reasons.

The first is that the time has come to realize that in the fields of pastoral psychology and counselling it is impossible for the minister to help persons in need without having a clear background of theological thinking. This fact has come more and more to my mind as I have been working on a recently-published book of mine in which I have tried to relate psychological procedure to theological thinking. Practical theology, especially pastoral psychology and counselling, has for the last twenty years been particularly concerned with psychology, psychiatry, social and anthropological sciences. Nothing should be said against this. It was necessary, and we have not yet come to the end of psychological investigations which will help us to give people ministerial help. We must not, however, as practitioners in spiritual healing, forget our background. We should be homeless and useless if we did not dig deep into systematic theology in order to help our fellow-men. We must know man, but that is not an excuse for not knowing our Bible and our theology. If we make it such an excuse, then as Dr Harold Roberts put it in the course of what he said at this conference, we shall be in danger of being psychological experts and theological charlatans. Here is a challenge which we have to face: How can we build pastoral care upon solid and clear theological thinking?

My second reason is that it sometimes seems as if theology can become an end in itself, more or less elevated from the areas of human problems and human needs. I refer to the Rev. Reginald Kissack's statement, in his opening address to the conference, that theology must be preachable. I would like to add that theology must be therapeutic, that it must give light and inspiration to men in their need and stress. The late Dr Theophil Spörri said in a paper

'Theological Emphasis of Methodism', read by him at the theological discussions at Reuti-Hasliberg, Switzerland, in 1954, that 'theology has meaning and justification only in the service of one's fellow-men, and can never be isolated from them, nor become an end in itself'. He went on to say that Methodist theology is entirely soteriological in its aims. Since salvation concerns man, Methodist theology must be anthropological in its setting, and here psychology enters into the picture. Here, then, is a second challenge which we have to face: How can theological thinking become more 'human', more efficient, more applicable to the needs of man in modern life with its stress and tensions? In what way can psychology enrich theological thinking?

The question of prevenient grace is one of the areas of theology in which the problems here stated converge.

I

The theological thinking on salvation, and we define 'salvation' here as all God's work to rescue and sanctify man, has always concentrated upon two aspects: the objective causes of salvation, i.e. what God has done and does for our salvation, and the subjective causes of salvation, i.e. what man can do and does in order to obtain salvation. Sometimes the emphasis has been laid on one side of the problem, sometimes on the other. Karl Barth, for example, emphasizes the objective view to such an extent that human abilities are pushed into the background, or even extinguished. On the other hand, it has been a temptation for natural theology, and for old and modern revivalists, to stress the human and subjective aspect of salvation to the extent that God's work is pushed into the background.

The theological problem which arises from the fact that salvation is on one side the work of God, and on the other side is dependent upon the attitude of man, is a very old problem. It will never be solved on this side of eternity. It is, however, our obligation to analyse this problem as far as our intellectual abilities permit.

Man's conception of the relationship between God's work and his own has varied with his psychological, cultural, and political state. In times of human arrogance, man thought he could do everything; if he thought of it at all, he thought he could even produce his own salvation. In time of human distress, man thought more in terms of God's action. The first trend of thought comes to the foreground in modern times; the second was common in the Middle Ages. Psychological thinking has sometimes ruled God out.

Are we culturally, and therefore also psychologically, on the verge of a new era? The possibilities of man are greater than ever; but a new way of thinking has emerged: man is afraid of his own works. He is no longer happy with what he produces. Does this new situation give God a new chance in the life of man? Barth's theology is based upon the assumption that man can do nothing, the assumption of disillusioned man, and this is God's opportunity. Modern trends in psychology open a new way for religion by emphasizing the global view of man.

II

But what of Methodist theological thinking? Our first impulse would be to say that, since Methodism stresses religious experience, the emphasis is laid upon

the human and subjective aspects of salvation, we might even say the psychological and anthropological aspects of it.

But is it right to label Methodist theology as mainly empirical? John Wesley does indeed emphasize more the practical than the theoretical aspects of religion, more the things to be done in order to obtain the sonship of God than the metaphysics of the nature of God, more the implications of salvation in a sanctified life than speculations about how it is brought about. All this is true. But it is even more true that, as Harald Lindström puts it: 'several of his [Wesley's] publications are devoted exclusively to the treatment of problems of central importance in theology'.¹

Truly, Wesley stressed, first, experience and then theological thinking. Sometimes theologians do it in the opposite way. This does not, however, expel theological thinking. It only gives a firm empirical basis for it, and makes it possible for theological thinking to give a wider contribution to Christian life.

Wesley's starting point is always 'What God has wrought in man's heart'. Let me quote from his sermon 'On working out our own salvation'. 'We are to observe that great and important truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The meaning of these words may be made more plain by a small transposition of them: "It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do." This position of the words, connecting the phrase of *his good pleasure* with the word *worketh*, removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole glory of his work. Otherwise we might have had some room for boasting, as if it were our own desert, some goodness in us, or some good thing done by us, which first moved God to work. But this expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and clearly shows his motive to work lay wholly in himself, on his own mere grace, in his unmerited mercy.'

Wesley goes on in explanation of this: 'First. God worketh in you; therefore, you *can* work; otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work, it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation. . . . Seeing all men are, by nature, not only sick, but "dead in trespasses and in sins", it is not possible for them to do anything well till God raises them from the dead. It was impossible for Lazarus to come forth, till the Lord had given him life. And it is equally impossible for us to *come* out of our sins, yea, or to make the least motion toward it, till He who hath all power in heaven and earth calls our dead souls into life.'

So far the emphasis has been laid upon the objective aspect of salvation, but Wesley continues: 'Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, "it is God only that must quicken us; for we cannot quicken our own souls"'. For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. . . .

'Therefore, in as much as God works in you, *you are now able to work out your own salvation*.² Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without

any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. . . . We know indeed, that word of his to be absolutely true: "Without me ye can do nothing." But, on the other hand, we know, every believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." . . .

'Secondly, God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work: You must be workers together with him.—otherwise he will cease working. . . . Even St Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark. . . . "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves."'

When John Wesley discusses the 'faculty' in us to which God's calling is directed, he says that it is the conscience. In his sermon 'On Conscience' he says: 'Conscience . . . is that faculty whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions; and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad; and consequently, deserving either praise or censure. . . .

'This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of natural conscience; an expression frequently found in some of our best authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed natural, because it is found in all men; yet, properly speaking, it is not natural, but a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments.'

These are clear statements which give us one solution of the theological problem of the subjective and objective aspects of salvation. The working out of our salvation is a result of a co-operation of God and man. This co-operation, however, is not a fifty-fifty per cent. work. It is not a co-action in that sense. It is a process of action-reaction. God acts; man reacts. God has always the initiative. We react to God's work for our salvation. If the reaction does not take place, salvation cannot be worked out. But even our reaction is based upon God's work, so far as the power to react is from God. Here we are at the main point of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace means that God's relationship to us is that of giving and forgiving, and that He has empowered us with abilities to react to His calling. Prevenient grace makes it possible for God to have a point of contact in the soul of man for the benefit of his salvation.

William R. Cannon states: 'Thus, though man is active in his response to justifying faith, he is active not because of any inherent natural ability or willingness of his own, but merely as the instrument of the grace of God housed within him. Wesley, therefore, in his insistence on grace discards, it seems, any notion of mere human co-operation.'³

Further, after having discussed the fact that man can resist the grace of God, and even kill it, Cannon states: 'Granting, therefore, man's ability to stifle and to kill the grace of God within him, have we the right to ascribe to him the positive role of a co-operator with God? We have. For in the very act of not killing grace and of listening to the voice of natural conscience, even though at times very inattentively, man is actually co-operating with God in God's effort on behalf of his salvation. This must be the case; it cannot be otherwise. Once you grant to man a power great enough to make itself felt as a deciding factor in the acceptance or rejection of the means necessary for the bestowal of saving faith, you lift him, whether you will or not, out of a state of mere passivity into one of activity and co-operation or non-co-operation with the grace of God.'

Here is a major point: The emphasis upon God's work does not abolish the

work of man, even though the work of man is in its source a work of God. And a further main point is this: The stressing of personal, empirical and experiential religion is not subjective in the sense that such religion only depends or mostly depends upon human activity, feelings, and experiences.

III

Methodist theology stands on firm ground when stressing prevenient grace as the basis for human action (reaction) and emphasizing the possibility of working out one's own salvation. But how is this thought in detail?

Sin brought man away from God. Man lost his *justitia originalis*, his original state of righteousness. How far from God did sin lead him? The Roman Catholic Church thinks that man was created ethically indefinite, but in addition received the so-called *donum superadditum*, a special gift that made it possible for him to control his passions. This special gift was lost in the Fall; but there is still a remnant of God or a God's image that gives the natural basis for man's contact with God. Protestantism, on the other hand, teaches that man totally lost his original righteousness in the Fall. There was nothing left in man that could serve as the contact-point for God's saving work on him. Man is totally depraved. John Wesley agrees whole-heartedly with the reformers on this point.

If this is accepted, it seems an impossible task for God to have contact with men; the point of contact is not there. Well, this is true so far as creation goes. The contact-point is not there as a rescued gift from creation. The contact point is a question of atonement, of salvation and grace. From the Cross grace goes out to all men, building up the basis for acceptance of salvation. Even the contact-point is a result of grace—prevenient grace.

The basis for our return to God is grace—both when we speak of God's work for us, and when we speak of our work in coming to God. There is no 'natural' contact-point for salvation in the human heart. Even the contact-point is grace: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2₈).

But how is this worked out? Lutheranism bases the thought of *gratia preveniens* basically upon baptism. In baptism the child receives the prevenient grace which makes him a child of God. But to say that prevenient grace is bound only to baptism is to misinterpret it in two dangerous ways. First, it means a limitation of prevenient grace. In our opinion prevenient grace goes farther back in the child's life than baptism. We think it goes back to the birth of the child. The child, when he enters this world, enters not only a world of sin; this world is by the grace of God also a redeemed world. The child is not only in the succession of Adam and his sin; he is also in the succession of Christ and His grace. 'That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1₉). 'Therefore as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life' (Rom. 5₁₈).

Second, by limiting prevenient grace only to baptism. Lutheranism does not make a distinction between prevenient grace and saving grace. It is also questionable whether Lutheranism distinguishes between saving grace and sanctifying grace.

What does Methodism teach about prevenient grace? We quote Harald

Lindström:⁵ 'Wesley believes that in natural man the image of God was completely lost. This applies to the moral image in which Adam was created and which constituted the essence of his relation to God. It is chiefly this that Wesley has in mind. On the other hand man's natural and political images have not been entirely lost, although in these respects too he has undergone severe depavation. Consequently man has retained his character as a personal being and certain of his features incidental to this character. He still has "the spiritual nature and immortality of the soul" and also "a degree of dominion over the creatures".' Lindström continues: 'He has fallen but still retains "an immaterial principle, a spiritual nature, endued with understanding, and affections, and a degree of liberty; of a self-moving, yes, and self-governing power", without which he would be "a mere machine or stock or stone". In this respect Wesley finds a certain continuity between man's life before and after the Fall. Yet it is a circumstance which in no way alters his idea of natural man. From the point of view of salvation natural man has no resources of his own whatsoever. He is sinful through and through, has no knowledge of God and no power to turn to him of his own free will.'

To totally corrupt men God gives, and He gives to all of them, prevenient grace. Lindström states that this is a doctrine that appears in Wesley's writings only in passing, and seldom in the years immediately after 1738. Wesley's concern was absorbed by the distinction between natural man, dead in sin, and man vitalized by faith. His attention was, therefore, devoted to the saving grace operative in justification and the new birth. 'With time; however,' says Lindström, 'prevenient grace acquires increasing importance, and concurrently his divergence from Calvinistic doctrine of election and his acceptance of Arminianism becomes more evident.'

The idea of prevenient grace is in Wesley logically bound up with the Arminian view of election. Although natural man is devoid of free will, all men have been endowed with a measure of free will and some power of discernment. As Wesley states in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, 'Natural free will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert that there is a measure of free will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world".' 'The liberty thus given to man is a liberty founded on grace,' says Lindström. 'Wesley believes that God redeems man as freely acting being. Grace is not irresistible. Man can either co-operate with it or oppose to it.' 'In the last resort the doctrine is based upon his [Wesley's] conception of God. Such free will harmonizes better to Wesley's mind with God's wisdom, justice and mercy than the reprobation which he says is the alternative.'

In Wesley's opinion, according to Lindström, the first effect of prevenient grace, is that it confers some discernment on everyone, although natural man as such lacks all knowledge of God. Here Wesley concurs with St Paul's statement in the Epistle to the Romans that even heathens are not without knowledge of God and His law. This discernment does not derive from the natural image of God (*imago Dei*), in which Wesley does not believe. Neither does it stem from so-called natural theology (*theologia naturalis*).

Secondly, Wesley thinks that the light given to all men through prevenient grace is particularly associated with conscience and its workings. But Wesley

sees conscience not as something 'natural', but as an expression of prevenient grace. Although everyone by nature is dead in sin, no one is in a purely natural state. No one is quite without God's grace, unless he has stifled it. To Wesley, therefore, conscience is a manifestation of prevenient grace. Wesley did not completely succeed in distinguishing between the so-called natural conscience and conscience as a manifestation of divine grace, but he has pointed out an important truth: God is working through prevenient grace in the conscience of man.

Thirdly, Lindström states that Wesley's doctrine of salvation is dependent upon his view of prevenient grace, saying that, on one side, man becomes entirely dependent upon God for salvation, and on the other side, the individual is responsible for the gift granted upon him through prevenient grace.

IV

It has been a joy to me to recognize the importance of the doctrine of prevenient grace in Methodist theological thinking. The basis of Methodist theology is the grace of God through Jesus Christ. That grace goes back to the very beginning of human life, and starts in the human heart as soon as it begins to beat. It prepares man to receive full salvation, and it is the basis for the Methodist doctrine of Christian Perfection or Perfect Love. It places the responsibility for the acceptance of salvation upon man himself, but it states also that salvation is a gift of God, and the work of salvation, both historically and personally, is God's work. And, most important for me, it gives me a basis of sound theological thinking for the fact that when I am counselling a person in stress and tension, I can depend upon God's work, both in me and in him whom I make a humble attempt in God's name to help. I can depend upon the fact that God is working graciously in man; therefore I can work.

For my psychological thinking, as well as for my practice as a counsellor and helper in the spiritual and emotional needs of man, this line of thought has been a bridge between two areas of science which makes it possible to unite theological thinking and ministerial practice in a new way for the practical benefit of souls in need. I agree with Dr Harold Roberts's statement in this conference that 'The main roots of our maladjustments are spiritual'. If so, we have a duty to express our theological thinking, which we must make as clear as possible, in ministerial service among our fellow men, and we have a duty to make that service as gentle and efficient as possible by the help of all we can learn about human life and reactions. This is not a question of semantics or linguistics, of translating theological terms of words into psychological or psychiatric language. That is of no help. It leads astray. We have not solved a single problem by translation of languages. We have only puzzled ourselves by thinking that we have made a contribution to the solution of man's deep needs when we only have got hold of some superficial expressions of these needs. This is a question of communicating the will of God and the power of God to man in his very practical and deep-felt needs. That is our obligation. The problems of man, emotional and rational, are not unsolvable. Through the grace of God and by insight into the will of God and the problems of man, there is hope for all. That is sound Methodist theology, and it is good psychology.

E. ANKER NILSEN

¹ *Wesley and Sanctification* (Epworth Press), p.1.

² The italics are mine.

³ *The Theology of John Wesley* (Abingdon Cokesbury, 1946), p.114.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.115.

⁵ *Op. cit.* pp.44ff.

THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION: SOME REFLECTIONS

METHODISM claims to have recovered elements in the gospel which are ever in danger of being thrust into the background. Among them is the doctrine of conversion, and there is no doubt that wherever Methodism has taken root, conversion in the sense of a conscious response to the call of God in Christ, awakened and sustained by the Holy Spirit, is held to be an indispensable condition of the Christian life. Although sudden or catastrophic conversions were a marked feature of the history of Methodism in its various branches, the central emphasis of the Methodist tradition is not upon the manner of the change, but upon the encounter of the individual with God and the glad commitment to His will. In recent years, chiefly as the result of a rediscovery of the place of the Church in the gospel, increasing attention has been directed to the importance of adequate preparation for Church membership. There are no ministers, we may hope, today who present candidates for church membership uninstructed in the Christian Faith. But it would be completely out of harmony with the Methodist ethos to make reception into membership, however crucial that step may be, a substitute for conversion. It would also be quite alien to Methodism to regard conversion as rendering unnecessary incorporation into the life of the visible Church. To answer the call of God as it comes to us in the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is to be in the Church, the fellowship of the redeemed. Conversion is individual and corporate, and it finds its fulfilment in fellowship in worship and life within the Christian community. But Methodism has always taught that the call must be answered by the individual, since God as He is encountered throws a man back upon himself. To respond to divine love as responsible beings whom God has addressed is to be delivered from the isolation of pride and self-interest and to find our peace in the family of God.

I

If by conversion we are to understand the response of the whole personality to God as He has made Himself known to us in Christ, the doctrine has a sure foundation in the Bible. That the words 'conversion' and 'convert' are rare in the English versions should not blind us to the fact that the thing itself is pivotal to Old and New Testament theology and religion. The biblical conception of conversion can best be understood in the light of biblical teaching about repentance. The Old Testament idea of repentance is expressed by the words 'turn' and 'turn back'. Repentance is a turning back to where we belong and may be likened to the return of a disloyal subject to the allegiance of his rightful sovereign or of a faithless wife to her husband or of idolaters to the worship of the true God. It involves something more than a change of mind. It is a deliberate change of attitude manifested in a new way of life (Isa. 55; Ezek. 18₃₀ff.; Hosea, esp. Chap. 14). Conversion embraces not only repentance, but faith. No man can turn to God without faith, and faith cannot be exercised without turning away from ourselves to God. Repentance and faith, however, are of God. Sometimes the prophets speak as though repentance were simply

the result of an act of will (e.g. Ezek. 18₃₁). But there are other passages which must be placed alongside those that appear to be Pelagian in outlook (e.g. Isa. 44₂₂; Jer. 31₁₈; Ezek. 36₂₆; Ps. 51). Here it is God who bestows the grace of repentance. He alone can cleanse the heart.

Jesus reiterated the call to repentance sounded by John the Baptist and confirmed it by His baptism. He made repentance and belief in the Gospel the condition of entry into the Kingdom, and with Him, repentance and faith were inseparable (Mark 1₁₅). The significance and consequences of conversion in the New Testament are illustrated by the terms 'justification', 'dying and rising', 'regeneration', 'renewal', 'adoption', 'darkness and light', 'a new creation', 'a new man'. These terms bring out the divine initiative in conversion, for all is of God, who sets us in a new relationship to Himself in Christ. United to Him, we die to self and rise to the life of perfect obedience to the divine will. Thus we become new creatures; we are born again into the family of God and share in all its wealth of love; and we know that we have passed from darkness to light, for the new life in Christ is not so like the old life that is centred in self that we are unconscious of the transition.

These key words which sum up the biblical teaching about conversion indicate that the religion of both the Old and New Testaments is a religion of crisis. The Bible is the story of the meeting of God and man, which is the essence of worship and ethics. Throughout the biblical story the emphasis is on the priority of grace. The God of the Hebrews is a living God. He is on the highroad of history, visiting and redeeming His people. He called to His service those whom nobody wanted and He entered into a covenant with them. Their response determined their destiny. The call was associated with a great deliverance from Egypt, and that particular event was the focus of their worship as well as of their conduct. God, again, calls the prophets to turn to Him. They are confronted by God at a particular time and presented with His absolute claims. The gospel itself is a proclamation of crisis: the kingdom of God is at hand. A new situation had arisen and the gift of an imperishable life was freely offered. Jesus, however, was not a peaceable preacher of the comfortable doctrines of divine fatherhood and human brotherhood who invited people to explore at their leisure the meaning of His message. There was a note of urgency in the question: What think ye of Christ? When Jesus sent messengers on an evangelistic campaign, He told them to challenge those whom they met with the fact that God had spoken and taken action. Their preaching was to be a judgement as well as an offer of salvation. It was to be an appeal for a verdict and for the kind of penitence that not only says, 'I will arise and go to my father', but goes forthwith.

II

Certain aspects of the response to God described as conversion should be taken into account.

(i) Whether conversion is 'gradual' or 'sudden' is a matter of secondary importance which does not affect its validity or permanence. We are not justified in setting a premium upon sudden or gradual conversions. The danger perhaps today is that we should rule out all expectation of sudden conversions and invest the spiritual capital of the Church in an evolutionary process which, as is

confidently believed, will culminate in the Christian character. Some conversions in the modern Church are in fact so gradual that it is not obvious that anything is taking place at all. Although Christian training in the home or the Church should not be designed to precipitate emotional crises or to make all conversions conform to one type, it should be borne in mind that for those whose background is Christian as well as for those who are outside the Church, conversion is an act of turning to God. It is for all a conscious act, for it involves a decision about a Person who comes with the gift of a new life and makes absolute demands upon His followers.

No one would wish to dispute the influence of unconscious processes in the development of the Christian life or the reality of what is gathered up in the phrase 'unconscious religion'. Clearly there are many people who are not far from the kingdom of God even if they are not aware of being anywhere in the vicinity. Conversion, however, involves a decision for which personal responsibility is taken. This does not imply that the stress and strain which characterized the experience of Saul of Tarsus, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, Wesley should be either expected or, so to speak, organized. And yet, for all who would share in the fulness of the Christian life, conscious commitment is essential. It is the high purpose of baptism, reception into Church membership or confirmation, and Holy Communion to prepare the way for and nurture the experience of reconciliation to God and His redeeming love in Christ. The act of commitment is admittedly the beginning only of the Christian life. In a sense, conversion is a daily process—a constant turning and re-turning to God which has as its goal complete union with God, 'that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify Thy holy name'.

(ii) Although feeling as a mental function plays its part in conversion, we have to beware of attempting to stereotype religious emotion or of seeming to imply that a particular type of feeling is an invariable accompaniment of conversion. Acting on this mistaken assumption, many have tried to engineer the orthodox emotion and have come by, not conversion, but disillusionment. Conversion is not a state of feeling, and if our main concern were the movement of our whole being toward God as He has manifested Himself to us in Christ, our feelings would look after themselves. To say that what Methodism teaches is salvation by feeling is base misrepresentation, but we might well avoid providing even seeming justification for such a travesty.

(iii) The test of the reality of conversion is to be found in a sense of forgiveness, a growing sensitiveness to sin, a conviction that all sin can finally be overcome by the power of God, an assurance that we are on the right road and that our life is in the hands of divine love, a changed relationship to our fellows revealed in social justice, the pursuit of peace, compassion, patience, humility and absence of self-concern, and a deepening allegiance to the Church as the people of God.

III

The prevalence of personal frustration indicates that the moral and spiritual conflicts to which the literature of conversion bears witness are still with us. It is widely recognized, even in some quarters which are generally far from orthodox in matters of religious belief, that the root cause of many maladjustments

is spiritual, and that if inner unity is to be secured man must turn away from himself to God. We tend to ignore in religious teaching what is perhaps unhappily described as original sin or the tendency to put ourselves in the centre of every picture and create life in our own image. Hence there arises a conflict so graphically portrayed in the biblical story of our first parents between the absolute claims of God and the absolute claims of man which are the fruit of self-deception. Conversion involves self-knowledge, and self-knowledge brings with it a sense of sin—a recognition that through bribing the jury and turning our conscience into our accomplice we have sought to put ourselves in the place of God. The sense of sin is an indispensable condition of spiritual development and its absence is a sign of abnormal personality. But self-knowledge and the sense of sin come from the vision of God and our willingness to lay ourselves open to its shattering revelations and follow where it leads. There must, we see once again, be a turning to God.

A significant corroboration of the doctrine of conversion is to be found in the philosophy known as existentialism. There are varieties of existentialism and it is doubtful whether in any of its forms it commands a substantial following. Born of disillusionment and of a loss of confidence in conventional religion, idealism and rationalism, it throws man back upon himself as Jesus did. It calls upon him to make a choice in a world in which—for the secular existentialist—there is no final security anywhere. Even the religious existentialist, who recognizes the claim of the absolute upon him, knows that he must act largely in the dark. Nevertheless, the existentialist holds that life means responsible choice which involves engagement and commitment. Perhaps the permanent elements in religious existentialism have never been better expressed than in Charles Wesley's famous hymn, 'Come, O thou traveller unknown'. The crucial lines are, 'Wrestling I will not let thee go, Till I thy name, thy nature know'.

It is the business of the Church to multiply the number of people whose lives have been transformed by the power of Christ, crucified and risen, and by the indwelling of His spirit. But no man drifts into the Christian life or finds himself within it unawares. Christ presents His call to the mind and conscience of every individual. To prepare the way for the right response to that call and to excite hunger for a life permeated by Christ in every part is the function of the Church through worship, preaching and teaching, the service of the community and the daily care of souls.

HAROLD ROBERTS

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

THE TEACHING of the Bible about the Holy Spirit is bound up with its teaching about Jesus Christ and His redemptive work.¹ What was done in and through Him was and is continuously communicated and made effective through the Holy Spirit. This continuing appropriation of the Saviour's work could not be left merely to the mercy of man's unaided response nor even to the Church. Therefore, the Holy Spirit was sent to make that work effective from generation to generation within the Christian community. Moreover, the Holy Spirit had to be operative not as an independent force, but as the recurring divine witness to the redemptive purpose of God which was concretely and finally expressed through Jesus Christ our Lord. From the standpoint of natural theology there is no approach to the distinctively Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In order to follow and amplify these Biblical directives, we shall consider them first as they are found in the Bible itself. Then we shall proceed to use the directives of the Bible to evaluate certain theoretical and practical misconceptions of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.²

I. THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

We shall not present any detailed account of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. The primary reason for this is that since the time for the unique work of the Holy Spirit had not fully come, there is no delineation of His work in the Old Testament that is here required. We may assert that He was a participating member of the Godhead at Creation and in the general governance of things—and in this way that He was making cosmic preparations for the coming Saviour—but this does not furnish the Christian mind with the proper insight into the uniqueness of the work of the Spirit. Looking backward from Jesus Christ, we may identify something of His unique mission, as the Nicene Creed does, in His work of preparing through the prophets the way for the coming Saviour of the world. But apart from this and the promise of outpouring (Joel 2²⁸⁻⁹), we do not find much in the Old Testament which illuminates the all-important mission of the Spirit. We encounter there primarily the rich background of preparation rather than the detailed delineation of a specific work.

The New Testament indicates that just as we understand the person of Jesus Christ through His work, so we come to a knowledge of the Holy Spirit through what He has done and continues to do. Here the uniqueness of the work of the Holy Spirit as centring in Jesus Christ, *the Saviour of all mankind*, becomes the key to understanding the Biblical teaching. The persistence and continuity of this theme in the New Testament may be seen first in the preparatory words of Jesus about the Holy Spirit, second in the event of Pentecost and in those events that followed upon it, and third in the inspired and judicious utterances of the Apostle Paul. To these, therefore, we must turn for a brief look at this most basic New Testament teaching on this subject.

Jesus was so deeply interested in the future of His followers after His own departure that He devoted Himself carefully to preparing them for whatever was to come. He told them of His death as a part of the divine purpose; He

spoke to them of His resurrection; He gave them the new commandment to love each other as He had loved them (John 13₃₅); He assured them of an enduring relationship with Himself (John 14₁₋₃); He warned them of the troubles that lay ahead of them (John 16₂₃); and in and through it all He promised them the Holy Spirit (John 14_{16, 26, 15₂₆, 16₇). It is a basic thesis of this paper that, notwithstanding what some contemporary writers on the subject have said to the contrary, Jesus knew that the victory of His followers was to be made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. And though this whole subject is complicated by the relative silence of the Synoptic Gospels, there is good reason to accept the essential validity of the report of John's Gospel which is corroborated by Matthew 28₁₉₋₂₀, Luke 24₄₉, and Acts 1₄₋₅.}

In the Fourth Gospel we encounter not only the definiteness of the promised gift of the Spirit but also a somewhat detailed explanation of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Comforter, or Holy Spirit (*παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*), would teach the disciples all things and help them to remember what Jesus had told them (John 14₂₆). The Holy Spirit was the Spirit of truth who would testify of Jesus (John 14₁₇, 15₂₆). He would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16₁₃). The phrase, 'into all the truth' (*εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν*), does not refer to the rich storehouse of the knowledge of the world and universe such as may be drawn from an encyclopaedia or from a library. It has to do with all truth pertaining to Jesus Christ which is pertinent to man's salvation. Therefore, in this same context Jesus said, 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you' (John 16₁₄). The Holy Spirit would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the judgement of God (John 16₈). That these functions were thought of as inseparably bound up with His own mission as Saviour is evident from the explanatory verses that follow (see John 16₉₋₁₁). In these ways, then, Jesus was preparing the disciples for the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom they were to proclaim the gospel to the world (Matt. 28₁₉₋₂₀) and through whom both they and the world would be convicted of sin and convinced of despair.

The supreme importance of the gift of the Spirit is seen not only in the Master's astounding remark that it is to the advantage of His followers that He should go away so that they might receive the Holy Spirit (John 16₇); it is seen especially in the risen Lord's renewal of the same momentous promise (Luke 24₄₉; Acts 1₄₋₅). This made a profound impression upon them and awakened in them the unfaltering sense of expectancy. The tremendous cumulative impact of these words of Jesus, together with the overwhelming significance of the Resurrection itself, prepared the way for Pentecost.³

This brings us to the second major source of insight into the Biblical teaching concerning the Holy Spirit—namely, Pentecost.⁴ In order to see how the presiding purpose of the Holy Spirit to exalt Jesus Christ was concretely manifested in history, we must consider the presence of the Spirit with the apostles and others after the Ascension of our Lord. The first great work of the Holy Spirit was to answer the prayer of Jesus that the apostles might be bound to each other in the unity of Christian love (John 17). That is to say, the Spirit began His Christ-exalting work by founding the Church at Pentecost. The work of the Holy Spirit which thus began in the community of believers continues to operate within that fellowship wherein Jesus Christ could be exalted

as Lord; and a primary aspect of that work was to bind the followers of Jesus together into a living unity in Christ.

It may be asked whether the Holy Spirit might have been given to some other group of sincere seekers after righteousness instead of the one in which the apostles were gathered at Jerusalem. The answer would be that, in the light of the New Testament, such a thing could not have happened. For example, it would be fantastic to suppose that the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost could have taken place at Plato's Academy near Athens, or at Qumran, or at the temple in Jerusalem, or in a group today primarily interested in talking about the Thomistic arguments for the existence of God. It is not a question of spatial location, but of historical background and spiritual preparation and divine providence.

In recent years it has been suggested that 'the Spirit of truth' spoken of in John's Gospel (14¹⁷, 15²⁶, 16¹³) is similar to the 'Spirit of truth' referred to in the Dead Sea Scriptures; and it has been suggested that the latter may have had some influence upon the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., goes so far as to say that the figure of the Paraclete of John 'is derived from' the complex of ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵ That there are some points of similarity must be recognized; but to carry the matter much further than this is to lose the basic insight into the teaching of the New Testament. The primary difference is that the Essene community of Qumran had no knowledge of the historically manifested Messiah to whom the Spirit bore witness. The efforts to find kinship there, other than of the most general sort, must therefore be regarded as academic ventures which have the fascination of novelty and of contemporary interest because of the exciting discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but which can succeed only on the assumption that the 'Spirit of truth' in John's Gospel has no organic unity with the work of Jesus Christ.

We are driven to the conclusion that the relationship between those particular individuals in the upper room and Jesus Christ was a necessary condition for their priority in receiving the Holy Spirit as they did. They and they alone were the ones who were bound to each other by their shared memory of Jesus' earthly ministry, by their concurring witness to the Resurrection, and by their common expectation. In all this we begin to understand the crucial significance of the four Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament for the life of the Church. We cannot be bound together under a Lord of whom we have no authentic report.

Far removed from the Biblical teaching, therefore, is the notion that the Holy Spirit breaks into history without rhyme or reason and chooses by arbitrary decree those He blesses. On the basis of the New Testament, we are not free to speak of the Holy Spirit in any other context than that which has to do with God's specific work of salvation through Jesus Christ and through the fellowship of those who bear His name. In this respect, the work of the Holy Spirit is not in the least degree original (see John 16¹³⁻¹⁵). No new content is added to the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not create new affirmations; He illuminates the Word of God for the Church. For this reason the Church cleaves to the directives of the Bible as illuminated by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not definitive; He is dynamic. His mission is never

to re-enact what Jesus Christ has completed once and for all, nor is it to become a life-giving force independent of the Saviour's work (cf. John 17₄, 4₃₄, 5₃₆, 19₃₀). For this reason, the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit in the disciples had to await the completed work of Jesus Christ (see especially John 16₇, 7₃₉; see also Luke 24₄₉₋₅₁; Acts 1₄₋₅).

At this point we must avoid the error in some contemporary theology which, by stressing the New Being in Christ and minimizing the actual work completed by Jesus Christ in history, comes very close to advocating a kind of Christianity of the Holy Spirit without any genuine affirmation of the Incarnation and Atonement.⁶ According to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit gives the new life by virtue of what Christ has done. Therefore, to stress the New Being without placing a prior stress upon the work of Jesus Christ is to move toward a type of existentialistic Christianity which, in the interest of transcending the problems of history, seems ready to lay aside the work of Jesus Christ for that of the Holy Spirit or even for that of a kind of general providence. Only the directives of the New Testament can save us from shipwreck here.

Paul carries forward the redemptive purpose of God by working within the members of the fellowship to assure them that through Jesus Christ they are the children of God (Rom. 8₁₄₋₁₇; 2 Cor. 1₂₂; Gal. 4₆; Eph. 1₁₃₋₁₄). Or, as John puts it, they have 'passed from death to life' (John 5₂₄; see also 1 John 3₁₋₃), and the Holy Spirit seals this fact with the inner witness. Through the Spirit people are brought into the new dimension of power and existence (2 Cor. 5₁₇; Gal. 6₁₅). The new life-giving relationship to Christ mightily affects the believers (Rom. 5₅; Gal. 5₆) and enables them to bear certain identifiable fruits by a faith that works through love. Here again, the experience on the day of Pentecost is the point in Christian history from which this fruit-bearing power became the norm for the Church. The apostles and others were enabled first to identify Jesus Christ as Lord and to grasp the deeper meaning of His death and resurrection. Then they were empowered by the Spirit through the new relationship which is the authentic principle of Christian action. Their united witness became a force history, and what happened then marked the realization within the Christian community of the divine strategy for overcoming man's pride and subjecting the societies of the world to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost thus marks the advent of the new age, the realization of eschatology,⁷ because it meant the release into history of the new principle of victory over life and death through Jesus Christ and within the community of believers. The heart-principle of the Christian ethic is that the love of Christ becomes the master-impulse of life only through the illuminating and empowering work of the Holy Spirit within the fellowship of those who live by faith in the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit calls and inspires some to preach and teach the gospel. He works to bless through the preaching and hearing of the Word. And, while the Holy Spirit is never mentioned explicitly in the New Testament in connexion with the Lord's Supper (unless John 6₆₃ is an exception), the implication is that the effectiveness of this Sacrament comes neither from any human leader nor from any material elements but from the power of the Holy Spirit who works through the instrumentality of both. In the light of the New Testament, there is good reason for saying that the principle of apostolic succession should be expressed in terms of the apostolic succession of those whom the Holy Spirit has

chosen to use as His instruments for carrying forward the work of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible.

A third source of insight into the Biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit comes from the writings of the Apostle Paul, who, as we have already had occasion to observe, guided the thought of the Church and gave it balance. If it is true that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12₃), it is also true that no man can genuinely belong to him who does not have the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8₉). The content of the work of the Holy Spirit is thus fixed by the quality of the life of Jesus. For this reason Paul, in one of his profoundest utterances, said, 'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2 Cor. 3₁₇). The fruit of the Spirit, in accord with the organic unity of God's redemptive work, had to be the living continuation of the Spirit of Christ. This is why Paul could write as he did about love (1 Cor. 13), and also about the fruit of the Spirit as 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control', against which there is no law (Gal. 5₂₂₋₃; see also 1 John 4₇₋₈).

According to Paul, the Holy Spirit moves like a mighty yearning within people, calling them to read aright, drawing them into the faith that justifies, persuading them in the life of prayer, and causing them to long for the dominion of Christ over all aspects of life. Sometimes the Spirit works slowly, like the movement of a deep river, sometimes swifter than a weaver's shuttle. But always His office is to magnify the Lord.

The Biblical teaching may be succinctly summarized by saying that the Holy Spirit performs the fourfold work (1) of preparing the way for the coming Saviour of the world, (2) of bringing mankind, through a proper understanding of the Bible and through faith, into the unique life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ, (3) of drawing the people of Christ together into a living unity, and (4) of causing this people to share a common concern for the souls of men, ever arousing them to the overwhelming task of evangelizing the world in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE THEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

This teaching concerning the Holy Spirit stands, in varied ways, in contrast to a number of recurring modes of thought which bear to it certain traces of kinship.

The first mode of thought identifies the Holy Spirit with the higher endowments and expressions of the human spirit. The basic idea here is simply that of the divine immanence. The Holy Spirit may be identified with man's natural capacity for seeking and grasping the eternal realm, or it may be viewed as man's striving for the Good, or it may be dialectically conceived, after the manner of Hegel, as a moment in the self-realization of the Absolute Spirit. It is God in His nearness as He works even in the natural man to enable him to move toward the realization of ideal values. The Holy Spirit may also be identified with those processes which, in their togetherness, make for the realization and preservation of human values. It is not of special importance here to delineate in detail the various shapes which this general mode of thought has taken, whether pantheistic, or in terms of cosmic process, or in some other form. The point is to show that the thought is an expression of a type of immanentism,

and that, whatever the particular form, it derives its character not from the directives of the New Testament but from certain intellectual perspectives which cannot be grafted on to the Biblical affirmation.

Two considerations may be presented in support of this conclusion. First, this general view of the Holy Spirit departs from the New Testament teaching in that it focuses attention upon human endowments, aspirations and achievements rather than upon the divine gift. The Holy Spirit is mistakenly identified with man's *Eros* or with the higher expressions of human nature. This is not to deny a place to these; rather, it is to keep our distinctions clear. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit never functions in the capacity of man's nobler endowments and aspirations. These native God-given endowments and human aspirations are to be understood, so far as the Bible is concerned, as the outcome of the creative work of God and also as the products of man's God appointed initiative. But they are not to be understood as affirmations pertaining to the Holy Spirit in man. This mistake has sometimes been made by those who seek to expound the idea of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, and it represents an elemental confusion.

There is another objection to the immanent view. The general idea of Spirit as operative in man stands in contrast to the idea of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament because the latter is always associated with Jesus Christ. The Church was true to the Scriptures and therefore to its own nature when it insisted on the unique relationship of 'procession' from or through Jesus Christ. Without getting involved in the debate over the *filioque*, we may simply assert that both parties in the conflict were right in recognizing the profound relationship between Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit takes the initiative in using man's God-given capacities to the end of awakening him to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of enabling him to enter into the life-giving relationship to God through Jesus Christ. But in no case can the directive power of these things be left to the initiative of man. The religious *a priori* is there,⁸ but it is neither constitutive of nor unresponsive to the great work of the Holy Spirit. If the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace is introduced here, it should never be understood as a divine operation in man which is independent of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. If prevenient grace is properly related to the Redeemer, then it becomes another manifestation of the determination of the Holy Spirit to magnify the Lord. If, on the other hand, prevenient grace is employed as a method of referring to the image of God in man, or to the 'divine spark' in man, etc., then the connexion with the work of the Holy Spirit is obscured and the topic of conversation has been changed.

A second mode of thought concerning the Holy Spirit which is at variance with the Biblical teaching takes its cue from the idea of transcendence. It has been supposed by some theologians that the Holy Spirit works in such contrast to the human spirit and so completely takes the initiative that He forces His way into human life without any genuine response on man's part. He works by thrusts from without rather than by persuasive illuminations and impulses from within. Somehow He impinges upon man's life, but since man's capacity for response is virtually cancelled out, the work of the Holy Spirit is rather an impersonal intrusion than a person-to-person encounter.⁹

On the human side, this transcendentalistic theory involves the supposition that man has no capacity so much as to accept the gift of God. This view, which played a role in reformation theology and which is revived in every generation of theologians, stands at the opposite extreme from the immanentism described in the foregoing paragraphs. There the Holy Spirit is identical with human aspiration; here there are no human capacities or aspirations which can figure in the Christ-subserving work of the Holy Spirit. Both of these extremes are to be avoided. This latter position, while following the Biblical demand of associating the work of the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ, can stand neither before the tribunal of the total Biblical insight nor before the plain facts of Christian experience. Unless man had a nature capable of responding, a religious *a priori*, or whatever else this complex God-given endowment may be called, there would be no basis for the person-to-person relationship effected by the Holy Spirit.

The truth, therefore, seems to be that while man's natural faculties and aspirations cannot lead him into the proper understanding of Jesus Christ, they do become the instruments which the Holy Spirit uses, with man's assistance, for the purpose of communicating the reality and power of the gospel. Man's higher nature and aspirations always figure in the work of the Holy Spirit, but they figure in the capacity of instruments co-operatively used rather than as directives. For example, conscience is not the voice of God; it is an instrument, like the ear, through which the Holy Spirit may speak. At this point the only danger is that of allowing man's religious *a priori* or any of his higher aspirations for that matter, to usurp the office which belongs to the initiative of the Holy Spirit. But in order to avoid this danger there is no need to go to the extreme, which is unwarranted both from the standpoint of the Bible and from that of the Christian life, of denying that there is in the work of the Holy Spirit a genuine personal, as distinct from subpersonal, communication with man. This not only does a disservice to the Biblical teaching about man; it also misunderstands and in so doing belittles the all-important work of the Holy Spirit.

Another mode of thought, which also has a speaking relationship with the New Testament but which is essentially at variance with it, comes out of certain types of mysticism. Here the Holy Spirit is thought of as the unseen power which, through steps in the spiritual ladder, either causes the human spirit to be merged into the divine Being or to entertain an inspired vision of God. Contemplation of Christ may be a distinctive feature of the strategy through which the Holy Spirit works. But, in this mode of thought, the goal is either absorption through Christ into the Being of God or, possibly, the experience of the vision of God, and not the personal relationship of belonging in the family of God which characterizes the basic perspective of the New Testament.

This mode of thought, with all of its ramifications, is at fault in a number of respects. First, it introduces the alien idea of absorption. In the Bible salvation is never thought of as man's losing of his personal identity in the Being of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit can never be so conceived without the most evident veering away from the New Testament. To be sure, Jesus said that His followers must lose themselves in order to find themselves (Matt. 10₃₉, 16₂₅), but this has an entirely different meaning from the one under consideration. Paul said, '... I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ...' (Gal. 2₂₀ A.V.; see also

Phil. 1²¹). But this has to do not with the loss of his unique self-identity but with the completeness of his allegiance to Christ and to the effectiveness of the living Lord within his own person. One of the most basic assumptions of the Bible is that because God is God and man is man the latter cannot be merged into the former. The mystical theory of absorption as the goal of religion, and as the work of the Holy Spirit, does a disservice both to the Christian understanding of God and to the Christian view of man. Individuality belongs both to God and man, to God in His infinite Being, to man in his finite and delegated selfhood.

This brings us to a second objection to the mystical view, namely, that it misconceives the function of the Holy Spirit and thus obscures man's whole approach to Christ. The Holy Spirit works to bring new life and power to people through Jesus Christ. While it is true that the Holy Spirit is thought of as a dynamic Presence within the members of the Christian community (Rom. 8₉; 1 Cor. 3₁₆, 6₁₉), there is no hint in this of a loss of personal identity by absorption or of a poetic vision of God. If this were the case, it would mean that the goal of the Holy Spirit would be to rescue man from his strivings in the world and from the clear call to duty so that he could repose passively, like a drop of water, in the vast ocean of God's Being. Here again the unique inner relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, which the Church has always maintained, must be reasserted; and by this we mean that Jesus Christ, as understood within the Church, must govern the theoretical statement of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The mystical view necessarily involves a misconception also of the work of Jesus Christ. It makes His work subservient to that of the Holy Spirit by turning His life and death into instruments of contemplation for the purpose of effecting the mystical union or vision. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to be thought of as stimulating the soul of man through the contemplation of Jesus Christ until it can climb the spiritual ladder to oneness with God or to a mystical vision of God. The work of Jesus Christ has been done. The Holy Spirit enables man to realize this and to accept the gift of forgiving and empowering grace with gratitude and obedience.

One more serious defect in the mystical view is that it is ineradicably individualistic and thus repudiates the Biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit does His primal work within the Christian community.

A fourth mode of thought which misconstrues the nature of the Holy Spirit has arisen from certain efforts, both scholarly and semi-popular, to explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Some have said that the mind of man is so constituted that sooner or later it had to come out with a trinitarian conception of God. The idea of the Trinity in the Christian religion, like the trinitarian ideas in other religions, was simply a product of the structure of the human mind. Others have urged that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity came from the feeling that there is something sacred about the number 'three'. Still others have insisted that the doctrine of the Trinity grew out of the influence of non-Christian trinitarian ideas upon the mind of the Church. In addition to these, some have sought to explain the doctrine of the Trinity by the practical demands of human life. Man needs a god who is both lord of the universe and of life and who is fully accessible. Therefore, he devised the idea of the Trinity to

answer his quest for ultimate spiritual security. It is a concrete expression of man's passion to accommodate God to himself.¹⁰

All of those theories pertaining to the Trinity are alike in that they move entirely outside the teaching of the Bible, whether explicitly or implicitly, concerning both the Trinity in general and the Holy Spirit in particular. They are, for the most part, ingenious theories fabricated by clever interpreters to make the unique doctrine of the Trinity fit into the preconceptions of a humanistic-naturalistic perspective. They all suffer from three basic defects.

First, they are not historically informed. This does not mean that they may not refer accurately to historical data, such as those pertaining to the trinities of the various religions; rather, it means that genuine historical insight into the Christian movement is lacking. Since the explanations begin with extraneous preconceptions, they lack the power of convincing the mind that they are valid, and the theories leave the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in only tenuous relationships to the historical Jesus and to the birth and historical development of the Christian Church. Whether the apostles and later Christians ever heard of other trinities or not becomes irrelevant. They were moved beyond measure by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and they could not explain His life and work without identifying Him as Lord. This was peculiarly clarified and authenticated by the gift of the Holy Spirit to them. Therefore, out of the experience of the first Christian Pentecost and out of subsequent continuing experiences in the Church, a further development in the Christian understanding of God became necessary. In this way the idea of the Holy Spirit became a part of the Christian mind, and, in trueness to the Master's promise, He had to be thought of as the continuing Presence who makes Christ's work real within the fellowship of believers.

The second objection to these various efforts to explain the Trinity is that they miss the organic relationship between Jesus Christ and the Spirit. Without this it is difficult to understand how the uniquely Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit would have been developed at all. From the standpoint of Christian history, threeness is nothing, other trinities are irrelevant and make no appeal, and man's practical needs are incidental to the primary facts of Christian experience. The point is simply that the great redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ had to be carried forward through the continuous divine initiative which was identified, on the basis of concrete events within the Christian community, as the third Person of the Godhead, or the Holy Spirit.

The third objection of these views is that they are all alike in being oblivious to the supernatural redemptive initiative of God in man's behalf, which alone gives validity and relevance to the teaching of the Bible about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Once the unity of the redemptive purpose of the Godhead—even in the midst of that distinctness of work which the doctrine of the Trinity implies—is clearly identified, through the reading of the Bible in the light of the apostolic perspective, the uniqueness of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity becomes evident and its later development becomes intelligible. The fact that this doctrine is marvellously suited to man's profoundest needs indicates not man's power of accommodating God to himself but God's superabounding graciousness, in His own Being, toward man. There is no genuine insight here from a merely human or cultural or practical point of view. The

key to the understanding of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit must be found in the distinctness of their work on the one hand, and in the organic unity of their work in the total divine redemptive purpose on the other.

III. THE PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

The New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit has certain practical consequences which need to be understood with increasing clarity throughout Christendom. Each of these takes on a very special significance in view of the mission of the Holy Spirit to protect, quicken, and advance the cause of Jesus Christ through the Church. The Church must be protected against unbalanced and unwarranted notions concerning the spiritual life; it must have the power within itself to live the life that is in keeping with its gospel; it must be aware of the principle of its continuity in the Bible as illuminated by the Holy Spirit; and it must continue to grow and multiply throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. While many practical consequences relative to these important concerns of the Church might be mentioned, there are four in particular which, in view of the unique mission of the Holy Spirit, demand consideration here.

First, the Biblical teaching guards the Christian Church against impractical, unedifying, and even harmful conceptions of the work of the Spirit. Various dangers surround the Christians who make extraordinary ventures into the spiritual life; and Christian history has planted many markers along the way which indicate the excesses to which even the sincerely spiritual persons may go as they seek to do the will of God. Man's imagination and pride frequently mingle with the revelation of God and with the work of the Holy Spirit to misread and to misguide. This is particularly true when we have to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. The directives of the Bible, therefore, are nowhere more urgently required than here.

For one thing, there is the error of identifying the work of the Holy Spirit with certain outward events and modes of behaviour which have often accompanied His presence and power. This is a natural error, because it is at first sight justified by the Bible itself. In the account of that first outpouring of the Spirit, we are told of a sudden sound from heaven as of a mighty wind (Acts 2₂). Cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of the persons there (Acts 2₃). Then there was the strange phenomenon of speaking in tongues which immediately followed upon the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2₄; see also 10₄₆, 19₆). Some have stressed such outward manifestations so much as to insist that they are the surest signs of being blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The full insight of the New Testament on this subject does not suggest that 'wind' and 'fire' and speaking in tongues are fruits of the Spirit, and Christian history bears out this understanding of the matter. Outward accompaniments are one thing; inner relationships and power are another. But outward manifestations are not to be made light of, for such occurrences are often needed to communicate to people the full impact of the work of the Holy Spirit. We are not to quench the Spirit by artificial and imaginary restrictions regarding what may or may not happen when the Spirit comes upon people (1 Thess. 5₁₉).

The plain fact is that in this earthly situation, physical demonstrations of one sort or another accompany all momentous experiences. With Moses it was a burning bush (Exod. 3₁₋₆); with Saul of Tarsus it was a great light and a voice

(Acts 9₃₋₄); with Augustine it was the preaching of Ambrose and the voice of a little girl singing, 'take up and read'; with Francis of Assisi it was the vision of the crucified Saviour and the marks of the nails upon his own hands and feet; with Thomas Aquinas it was an experience which brought an abrupt halt to his lifelong habit of writing; with Pascal it was a great inner 'fire'; with John Wesley it was the strangely warmed heart. One person sees a vision, another hears a voice, another loses his sight, another stops writing, another starts writing, and so it goes on in unlimited diversity. The temperaments and backgrounds of people are almost infinite in their variety, and this leads us to suggest that God, knowing this, has used almost infinite varieties of accompaniments to communicate and seal the work of the Holy Spirit. But that work itself, which, by virtue of its centre in Jesus Christ, is always the same in its essential nature, is never to be confused or identified with these outward and occasional factors.

Another frequently unedifying and possibly even harmful conception of the workings of the Holy Spirit has to do not with outer accompaniments but with inner impulses and feelings. This may be called spiritism. One of the most common interpretations of the work of the Holy Spirit in this connexion is that He gives specific guidance in matters of daily life, however great or minute they may be. When rightly understood and prayerfully controlled, this view may assist people mightily in glorifying God through their daily living. But there are dangers which must be identified and avoided. A person feels guided to talk to a stranger about his spiritual life, or he has the urge to visit someone, or he feels led to open the Bible and read whatever happens to fall before his eyes. He buys or sells property or stocks on this basis. He attributes his sense of impending danger to the warning power of the Holy Spirit. He may take up every conceivable hunch or suggestion and think of it as a mandate from the Spirit.

The basic comment to be made about this view is that its connexion with the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit may be incidental and tenuous. To be sure, all this may be so understood and qualified as to be a genuine extension of Christ's work and therefore in harmony with the teaching of the Bible (see, for example, Luke 12₁₂; Acts 8₂₉, 13_{3, 4}; 16₆₋₇, 20₂₃, 21_{4, 11}; Rom. 8₂₆; 1 Cor. 12₇₋₁₁). But this general view of the Holy Spirit needs to be held in check continuously by the directives of the New Testament. Frequently it is not a development growing out of the organic unity of the Biblical utterance, but represents a view which comes out of a more or less piecemeal reading of the Bible. It sometimes even tends toward the pagan notion that the Spirit is a kind of *alter ego*, bodyguard, prompter, spokesman, whose primary mission is to follow certain chosen ones around in order to show them what to say and what moves to make in the midst of the shocks of accident and the humdrum recurrences of daily life. Except when entertained and expounded by those rare saintly souls who manifest a high degree of consecrated intelligence, this general idea leaves us with a peddling account of the Holy Spirit and does not fit properly into the directives of the Bible. His great office is not to ferry us about and do things for us that we ought to be doing for ourselves, but to quicken our plans and purposes, to illuminate our reading of the Word, to stir up the gifts of God that are within us so that we may be rightly related to Jesus

Christ, magnify Him, and show in our lives the deeds which are worthy of those who bear His name.

Moreover, spiritism tends to exaggerate the role of the individual in relationship to the work of the Holy Spirit. This runs counter to the directives of the New Testament, where the primary work of the Spirit is done in and through the fellowship or team of believers.

One more comment is in order. Spiritism frequently calls for an abandonment of common sense in the interest of a type of guidance whose fruits are not at all commensurate with the claims of those who believe that they are led by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence, the claims often become comical, when they are not at the same time tragic. Almost every conceivable error of judgement and breakdown of intelligence has been attributed to the Holy Spirit; and there is probably no area of the Christian life wherein man has more readily allowed his imagination to play the fool with him than in this one. Because of these considerations we are enjoined to 'prove all things' (1 Thess. 5₂₁) and to 'believe not every spirit', but to 'try the spirits whether they are of God' (1 John 4₁; see also 1 Cor. 2₁₅, 14₂₉).

Though all this is true, it is also true that there are distrusting cliques of the cultivated and learned who fail to realize that the habit of halting before thought and action in order to consider the will of God as disclosed in Jesus Christ, or that the habit of waiting to be guided by the Holy Spirit, is as sound as it is rare. As long as it is informed by the spirit of Jesus Christ it has the salutary effect of raising people above the petty claims which tend to dominate their life and thought. Moreover, in the lives of the saints this mode of divine guidance has been so effective that it should commend itself, not only to the generality of mankind in whom it would obviously do good, but also to sophisticated intellectuals who in their own ways are the victims of prejudice and pettiness equally disastrous to the higher reaches of the spiritual life.¹¹

Again, the New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Spirit not only protects the Church against unedifying and sometimes harmful views of God's dealings with man, but it also enables the Church to be ever mindful of the true Christian principle of victorious living in all community relationships. People live with an increasing degree of Christian maturity and triumph neither by their own inner resources alone nor by the advantages of civilization. These have their important functions in the Christian life, but they do not get to the bottom of the human situation, nor do they provide sufficient power to see life through in keeping with the demands of Jesus Christ. It is the Christian conviction that people are not only forgiven by the grace of God; they are also empowered by it. The Christian principle of the moral life, therefore, is found in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit within the fellowship where the Bible is understood and where Jesus Christ is Lord. It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance that John Wesley attached to this thought.

In contrast to all other strategies for the improvement of mankind and for the conquest of sin and death, the New Testament teaches that no principle even approaches adequacy which leaves out the power of God in Jesus Christ working in and through the Christian community. The only power which can transform people and lead them toward the kind of living together which the world desperately needs and which Jesus Christ requires is that of the Holy

Spirit working within the fellowship of believers to comprehend and to exalt Jesus Christ as Lord. Perfection may never come to completion in a finite being. But by the power of the Holy Spirit who makes for righteousness there can be increasingly realized a kind of finite excellence within the community where Jesus Christ is Lord.

Man is made for ideal values, for Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and for the one true God in whom alone these values have their ultimate sanction. Yet man is so bewitched by his own beloved ego and so lured by the trifling parade of happenings right before his eyes that he falls victim to the tyranny of the immediate present. Then begins that long, monotonous, pathetic march down the highways of mediocrity that some people call living. But all the while it is as if the eternal voice of God were saying in the innermost recesses of his being that man was created for two realms, this realm of time and the other realm of an enduring relationship with God. This is the human situation. Man is frustrated at the very centre of his being because he does not know how to find the meaning of his existence in the face of this situation. Every alibi, every mode of escape, every cheap or refined trick, has failed him. In all this we can trace the long course of that contaminated stream which has polluted our age with the stench of meaninglessness and despair. Some of the contemporary theologians have done mankind a noble service by taking away the mask of human complacency; but, in neglecting the adequacy of the vast resources of God's great salvation, they have also taken away the breastplate of hope and courage.

We are now in a position to know that neither conscience, nor our natural sympathies and affections, nor our common civilities and refinements, nor our educational advantages, nor our engineering skills, nor culture, nor any other product of our own making, can by itself endue us with that power which our history, our nature, and our social situation demand. These may have their rightful places, but in none of them is there sufficient power to condemn us that we may repent, sufficient inspiration to strengthen us that we may win the battles with temptation, sufficient love to purify us that we may overpower selfishness in all social relationship, sufficient wisdom to guide us that we may direct our paths through our personal and social perplexities. By the power of the Spirit, both culture and the orders of creation have been and may continue to be transformed. And, incalculably beyond this, by the power of the Holy Spirit, man is given the joy of knowing that he passed from death into eternal life.

A third practical value of the Biblical teaching about the Holy Spirit is that it enables us to identify the authentic principle of the Church's power and unity. It is often supposed that this principle is to be found in the apostles and their successors. According to this theory, the principle of continuity in the Church is found in the Master's act of delegating His work to the apostles and their successors.

This cannot be squared with the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit. There the apostles are absolutely subservient to the work of the Spirit. Their being apostles was secondary to their being informed and empowered by the Spirit. The force that bound the various Christian communities together was not the presence of the apostles but the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit who exalted Jesus Christ as their one Lord. The apostles and all

others were the recipients of the grace of God on the one hand, and the original instruments for communicating it on the other. The organic unity of the total redemptive purpose of God is to be discovered, therefore, not so much in its continuation through the apostles—though that has its importance—as in its continuation through the never-ceasing determination of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the reading and preaching of the Bible and to magnify Jesus Christ from generation to generation. The clue to the understanding of the principle of the continuity of the Christian religion is to be found, then, in the Master's remarks on the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel, in the experience of Pentecost, and in the directives of the Apostle Paul.¹² Those who follow directly in the line of the apostles lose no genuine privilege because of this analysis. As ministers of Jesus Christ, they are the bearers of His standard, His witnesses, called and set apart to be His ambassadors, inspired and honoured by the power of the Holy Spirit who alone authenticates and prospers their ministry and brings them joy in the gospel. This means also that, in the light of the New Testament teaching about the Spirit, the Church is not merely biding its time before some eschatological age to come, but it lives and breathes and moves in the new era of the here and now to work redemptively in the world today.

A fourth practical consequence of the Biblical teaching may be mentioned and allowed to speak for itself in the contemporary theological situation. The central teaching of the New Testament saves the Church from being carried away with vain and extreme attempts at demythologizing and with unbalanced eschatological interpretations. These modes of thought usually misunderstand the mind and person of Jesus Christ, as the Church has understood them; they misread the nature of His salvation, and misconstrue the character of the Christian life. They manifest more of the passion to satisfy the preconceptions of modern sophisticated man than they do to follow the directives of the word of God.

The theology of the Holy Spirit guides the expectations of a waiting Church. But infinitely more important than the doctrine is the mighty *surging fact of the illuminating and empowering presence* of the Spirit moving within the body of Christ to magnify the Lord in our total life.

MACK B. STOKES

¹ For important recent studies on the Holy Spirit see C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), J. E. Fison, *The Blessing of the Holy Spirit* (London: Longmans Green, 1956), and George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956).

² It is the purpose of this study to clarify the Biblical directives concerning the Holy Spirit and to identify them as the proper instruments for theological elaboration and critique. Although this effort is carried forward in keeping with the spirit of Methodism, no attempt is here made to treat explicitly John Wesley's reflections on the Holy Spirit. Neither these nor any other later developments add new content to the Biblical directives, though they are instruments of very great value in understanding and communicating the full import of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The treatment of the contribution of the Wesleys and their followers to this topic, therefore, properly belongs to an additional study which presupposes that the Biblical directives have been fully clarified and that they have become normative in theological discussion.

³ On the significance of the Scriptural references to John's Gospel in the foregoing paragraph see *The Interpreter's Bible*, VIII.707-9, 711-13, 727-9, 730-3.

⁴ Cf. R. H. Strachan, 'The Gospel in the New Testament', in *The Interpreter's Bible*, VII.7-10.

⁵ Frank Moore Cross, Jr., 'The Dead Sea Scrolls', in *The Interpreter's Bible*, XII.661. He fails to pay sufficient attention to the distinctive relationships between the Paraclete and Jesus Christ which have always been maintained in the predominant thought of the Church. See also in this connexion *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, tr. Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1956), pp.43-6.

⁶ Paul Tillich appears to adopt this view, which, from the standpoint of the history of Christian thought, veers away from the directives of the Bible. See his *Systematic Theology*, II.97-180.

⁷ Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1952).

⁸ This has to do with man's native capacity for religious faith and experience which is present as a God-given potentiality within man.

⁹ At times Karl Barth seems to involve himself in such a position. Cf. his *The Holy Ghost and Christian Beliefs*, tr. R. Birch Hoyle (London: Frederick Muller, 1938), pp.18, 22, 23, 45. See George S. Hendry's decisive critique of Barth at this point in *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* pp.108-17.

¹⁰ For a statement and critique of this general approach to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, see A. C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), pp.370-85.

¹¹ The objections that some theologians, and particularly neo-orthodox theologians, raise against pietism illustrates this point. There is a difference between a genuine and a false pietism. That there is a kind of Christian piety, based upon the New Testament, which transcends a merely imputed righteousness is beyond reasonable question. God saves man not only in his sins but also from his sins. And this is not to be understood in such a manner as to imply that man is ever perfect. The prayer of repentance is relevant in the life of every Christian, and this is all the more true of those who come ever closer to God. Moreover, the surest sign of imperfection is to profess perfection. In a finite being the law of growth is absolute. For a very balanced and historically informed study along this line, see R. N. Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

¹² For a penetrating and judicious analysis of this interpretation see J. E. Fison, *op. cit.*, pp.128-30.

PERFECTION

THE WESLEYAN teaching about perfection is less a theological doctrine than an ethic of the Christian life, more a pattern of behaviour for men to follow here on earth than a nice delineation of our relationship to ultimate reality.

Wesley's anthropology, for example, is, with a few minor modifications, thoroughly Augustinian; and his doctrine of God is that of the Thirty-nine Articles, softened and humanized by Laudian and Caroline interpretations. His dependence upon divine grace is as absolute as the Calvinist's, and his exaltation of the atonement in its objective signification is as high and as splendid as Anselm's. To be sure, he practised the presence of the Holy Spirit as strenuously, as exactly, as satisfyingly, even as gloriously as any early saint or martyr; yet I cannot see that he promulgated any new doctrine concerning Him or helped to clarify His peculiar functions in the total economy of the Trinity. Indeed, when we reflect closely upon his teaching of assurance, a belief most precious and salutary to Methodists, the signs he gives by which a person can be assured that he has or has not saving faith and is or is not forgiven his sins are almost entirely ethical—that is to say, moral and spiritual. Does the person

claiming assurance love God with all his heart and delight only in the performance of His will? Does he have daily victory over all temptations to the extent that he does not commit a known sin? Does he love his neighbour as himself? These queries are all in reach of the particular and definite. They are capable of a 'yes' or 'no' answer. They are practical, not theoretical; a person either does or does not practise by thought, word, and deed what they seek to ascertain.

Now the Wesleyan teaching about perfection lies, in my judgement, in the same general area of interest and concern, and is subject to the same procedures. It is not dependent, for example, in its explication upon any peculiar theological interpretation. The resources of saintliness are in the custody of the Lutherans as well as the Roman Catholics, of the free-thinking, informal Quakers as much as the doctrinally exact and liturgically precise Greeks. Indeed, similarity of virtue defies practically all theological dissimilarities, breaks across doctrinal boundaries, and confuses us in all categories of identification apart from that sign of moral purity which is its very own. The good man is never just the Methodist. Perfection seldom has anything whatever to do with a creed.

Consequently the outward contour of holiness was before Wesley as a pattern of behaviour while he was still at Oxford. The Holy Club was a reality before Methodism. Even specific principles of perfection were ascertained by intellectual analysis before ever the reality of attainment was either had or properly and successfully pursued. That is to say, the Christian ethic as a concrete and particular idea, as the design of individual behaviour, grasped Wesley before any great theological conviction took control of his mind and animated his will to effect the revival. He knew, or at least thought he knew, what the life of a saved person was, without being saved himself. And strange enough, once he got saved, that concept—or, perhaps more properly, that blueprint of character—was not altered but remained constant and unchanged. Before Aldersgate Wesley was like the Apostle Paul before his trip to Damascus: the good that he knew he ought to do he did not, while the evil that he despised that he practised. All the same, the ethic of saintliness as an ethic existed for Wesley as something in itself unaffected by either the probability or even the possibility of its realization; for, like Kant's good will, its inherent worth lay in itself and could not be added to or diminished by external considerations.

That is why perfection as such had so little to do with the initiation of the revival and why its effects upon Wesley were such that he could never claim its possession for himself. Like Plato's forms, it was for ever above and beyond its earthly model. At least its prophetic proponent was unwilling to use himself as the example of its realization. Though he insisted that it was possible for men and women to attain holiness on earth and literally to fulfil the commandment, 'Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect', he turned aside from his usual practical considerations of what he saw in the persons who professed perfection and accepted instead their own testimony that the Spirit had wrought this final miracle of grace in their lives.

The teaching itself is simple enough and, like Anselm's ontological proof of the existence of God, can be cast into a single sentence. Christian Perfection, according to Wesley, is a life every action of which issues from an uncompromised love of God and therefore of all the things of God. As every deed was behind it a motive and every thought is itself purposive—that is, pregnant with

intent—so the single motive, the one purpose of the complete Christian, is unselfish love.

Though the Wesleyan teaching about perfection is simple enough and its economy of elucidation is amazing, debate concerning its relevance, the possibility and impossibility of attaining it, is unending, so that a great deal of the subsequent history of Methodist thought consists of men's reaction, positive or negative, to the doctrine of holiness. There are, on the one hand, those who look upon holiness as a grandiose claim so extravagant that to support it is either to become a hypocrite by professing to have attained the unattainable or else to reduce the sublime to the habitual accomplishments of mundane existence and thereby to make saintliness so ordinary as to be indistinguishable from mere religion. On the other hand, there are those who treasure holiness as the distinctive contribution of Methodism to Protestantism by finding in it the exemplification of free grace in the sphere of human existence, the translation of forgiveness into behaviouristic concreteness, indeed, the equation of moral goodness with the experience of Christianity so that piety and redemption are one.

There cannot be any point of reconciliation between these two parties on this issue, because each of them has introduced an extraneous consideration which it has come to regard as the presupposition of the issue of holiness. That presupposition in both instances is theological. The concept the two groups entertain of God is their unbridgeable chasm of difference, and that, amazingly enough, without affecting the practice of holiness in either group. There are saints among both those who disparage saintliness and those who consider it the *summum bonum* itself. Wesley avoided this situation. He looked upon holiness as an experience, not an issue; he talked about a functioning reality without bothering too much about its ultimate meaning. Indeed (and here, to my mind, was his special genius) he affirmed an end without delineating exactly the means of its accomplishment. For him, moral and spiritual perfection, like faith itself in the initial act of justification, was the free gift of God.

Is sanctification, then, an act or a process? Does perfect love come instantaneously or gradually? Is it emotional experience or moral excellence or perhaps both?

All these really are irrelevant considerations. Human perfection of behaviour that is least compromised by imperfection is uncalculated, effortless, and even without self-conscious realization. It is the mere by-product of a life given over wholly to God and directed entirely by His Spirit. What would be more exasperating than a comparison of one's moral and spiritual state today with that of yesterday? What would be more frustrating than the compulsion to be better and to do better than one was or had done during the preceding phase in the long series of experiences we call life? Who knows whether his love of God is perfect or not, or who can provide a sufficient personal gauge by which to measure it?

But if God is what we believe Him to be, perfect both in power and in love, it is reasonable to suppose that He can and will make us who love Him in disposition and behaviour like Himself. That is enough. Anything more would be too much.

The best use we Methodists can make of any teaching about perfection, at

least as it involves personal claims of attainment from ourselves, is no use at all. It is an ethic of behaviour recommended by example, not by explanation. It is the inward and outward expression in human life of the love of God, which the Father of all mercies alone can confer. We love Him because He first loved us. And we behave like Him, too, not because we are able to strive as an athlete who strains his every nerve to obtain the prize, but precisely because we are not able and trust entirely on His grace to empower us. Only in our weakness can we prove in ourselves the power of God's strength. The life of the Christian man motivated and directed entirely by the love of God is the perennial personification among men in all generations of St Paul's confession: 'It is no longer I who live; it is Christ who liveth in me.' Christian perfection, then, is the norm of behaviour for every converted man here on earth. It is the demonstrative proof of the effective operation of the Holy Ghost. It is the tangible and convincing evidence that grace is more powerful than sin, that redemption has triumphed over depravity, that a God who rescues and delivers is likewise a God who transforms and preserves. Anything less than perfection in human nature is unworthy of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who forgives us our sins and fortifies us by grace also works a marvellous transformation in our nature by doing exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight and enabling us to grow into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Men glorify God because of the good works He does through His children. Christian perfection is nothing less than the life of God Himself seen in the character and behaviour of the redeemed man. Entire sanctification is the earthly end of which justification is the beginning, and perfect love expressed in human behaviour is the ultimate effect in time of which convicting and converting grace is the first cause. We are all called by God to be saints and a saint is one whose virtues are worthy of the imitation of all Christendom.

*Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
If with His love He befriend thee.*

This process, culminating in an act and continuing still as a process, which God alone through the Holy Spirit can initiate, bring to fruition, and perpetually sustain, must of necessity be localized in the individual, for personality as personality is the only entity of creation capable of receiving and exemplifying the divine redemptive power. Yet as an ethic it has far-reaching social implications. It is no less than the offer of God through redeemed men of the transformation of all life. Wesley's quaint notion of the automatic rectification of all creation as the accompaniment of human redemption, though unusable in its outmoded form of expression, none the less contains a powerful ethical truth; it is the witness to his conviction that personal holiness cannot be made perfect in isolation, but needs for its own health the fellowship of holiness created in the Church and sought by the Church for all mankind.

Therefore, though saintliness ceases to be itself when its gauge is turned inward upon the contemplation of its own virtues, none the less it exists in the individual as an eager concern for the righteousness as well as the total welfare of his fellows, even his enemies. Bernard of Clairvaux's willingness to accept

the possibility in love of hatred—that is, of the hatred of what he takes God to hate—is impossible to the Methodist made perfect in love, for the Methodist responds, as did Christ, to what it is possible through grace for all men to become. Consequently the concern in America and elsewhere with the so-called social gospel need not be mere human activism unaided by God. It may be, and in many cases is, the honest exemplification of redemption, for the good man cannot stay good for long unless he is perpetually busy about the welfare, spiritual as well as material, of his fellows. Perfect love means a restless, passionate, heart-breaking, consuming concern for other people. Its corollary of necessity is the Kingdom of God, 'Kingdom' meaning reign or rule, not territory or institution, and that reign starting in the heart and life of an individual and reaching out through all social expressions to the far ends of the earth.

Karl Barth is not unmethodistic when he paraphrases the Apostle Paul in the words, 'Having nothing of himself, the more he received the more he gave, and the more he gave the more he received'. That is Christian perfection when what we've got is the love of God as our only motive, and the love of others in service as God loves and serves us as our only concern, and humble gratitude for all we are and have as the free, undeserved gift of God.

WILLIAM R. CANNON

THE RELATION OF FAITH AND ORDER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

OUR PRIMARY source of knowledge of God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ is the New Testament. In it we see God calling forth man's response in penitence and trust to His visiting, redeeming, saving act in Christ. This response of faith is accompanied by God's creation of a partnership or fellowship, a uniting in an experience of Christ, a faith in Christ, that was common to every member of the fellowship. These people of God, newly covenanted, had experienced a new life, a new way of life in Christ. They were enthralled by a hope that included not only this life but that of the world to come. They were charged in solemn commission with declaring, proclaiming and witnessing to this best of good news of Christ and His salvation. They were heralds of the gospel and envoys of the faith.

Thus the act of God in Christ, responded to by men of faith, begets the Church. It is the *ecclesia*, as the New Testament calls it. It is the Body of Christ, to use Paul's favourite figure of speech with reference to it. The *ecclesia* has many members in many places with disparate gifts of the Spirit for the varied tasks needful for its life, work and witness. As the whole household of faith responds to the Holy Spirit, it gradually works out ways and means through organization and order, to celebrate and to clarify the Good News for purposes of witnessing effectively to the faith.

Thus faith and order in the New Testament are inseparable. Their relation is one of dynamic dialectic tension. The *ecclesia* is the called-forth-faith and the created-community yoked together for their Master. The same God in Christ who calls forth the faith creates the community of faith as the living form of the living faith in the living Christ.

The New Testament shows us that the members of the *ecclesia* have an essential and inescapable dimension of common partaking, sharing and communion both with Christ and with each other. This fellowship is intent on expressing the different ways in which the men of faith participate in the love of God and love of their fellow men. The *koinonia* witnesses to the faith. The Word of God in Christ calls together a diverse company to a life of service which is sacramental in its mood and round of celebration. The celebration by the community of its community in Christ is its evidenced *koinonia* in action.

The perception by Christians of the common character of their oneness, through the various dimensions of the fellowship, is further evidence of the *koinonia*. But the *koinonia*, like all other aspects of the Church, is an aspect of the commission of Christ and the empowerment by His Holy Spirit for the imperious task of bearing witness to their faith in God's saving action in Jesus Christ. We turn, then, to look at the dimensions of the witness of the community of Christ whose faith is manifest in its order, and whose order and organization are modes of its faith.

The New Testament suggests four principal dimensions of the inter-dependent and inseparable dual witness of faith and order by the *ecclesia*. As the witness continued and spread there came about the evolving clarification of faith into later doctrines and creeds, and the growth of community into organization and institution with designated leaders and offices. These four dimensions we are designating as: Word, Life, Organization, and Worship. The New Testament terms are *Kerygma*, *Didache*, *Diakonia*, and *Leiturgia*. In each and in all of these we find faith and order inseparably fused in a God-given unity.

WORD—KERYGMA

First, or in the beginning, is Word or *Kerygma*, for as Paul says to the Corinthians: 'It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe' (1 Cor. 1₂₁). What the apostles proclaimed was God's Word made flesh in Jesus, in 'Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 1₁₃). The Gospel or 'the word of faith which we preach', as Paul wrote to the Romans, is 'that Jesus is Lord and . . . that God raised him from the dead' (Rom. 10₈₋₉). The central word in the Christian proclamation was the Lordship of Christ (Rom. 14₉).

As C. H. Dodd tells us, the *kerygma* was concerned 'with the data of the Christian faith' which were the foundational parts of the common Gospel. Dr

Dodd summarizes what he calls 'a comprehensive view of the content of the early *kerygma*', the word or proclamation witness by the early Jerusalem Church by means of which God converted or saved many. The line of thought runs thus: (1) 'The age of fulfilment has dawned', that is, 'the expected time when God, after long centuries of waiting, should visit His people with judgement and blessing, bringing to a climax His dealings with them in history', thus, 'the apostles declared that the Messianic age has dawned'. (2) 'This has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus', according to the Scriptures. (3) 'By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, a Messianic head of the new Israel.' (4) 'The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory' (Acts 2₃₃ and 5₃₂). (5) 'The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ.' And finally (6) 'The *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of 'salvation', that is, of 'the life of the Age to Come', to those who enter the elect community. The *kerygma* is proclaimed at Pentecost by Peter, who answers the hearers' heart-searching question, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' with his forthright word: 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him' (Acts 2₃₈₋₉). This summary by Dr Dodd is one responsible way of articulating what is meant by *kerygma* (see *The Apostolic Preaching*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936).

The *kerygma* is the substance of the proclamation, it is what is preached; but proclamation and preaching mean the actual announcing by the messenger of the good news of God's redemptive action in Christ. It is action by man's living words witnessing to God's revealed love for men, to the fact that in Christ there is a new and reconciled relationship, a new quality of being through His judgement and mercy, His compassion, forgiveness, unmerited favour and help. It is really God's proclamation, announcement, call, offer, promise through His Word to the individual hearer, but employing the instrumentality of one who speaks for the community of the convinced witnesses who have been born again through God's redemptive action in Christ. In Him they have been given new life by the Holy Spirit and men can see and hear what the Gospel has done. God preaches His Gospel through the preacher's witness to the Gospel. The Word uses the preacher's words as the immediate form of its continuing power to save. The witness of the apostles was crystallized in the oral and written traditions of the *ecclesia* and made accessible to us eventually through the canon of the New Testament.

Among the men of faith, certain ones were acknowledged as possessing the gift of proclamation. Chief among these were the apostles and the evangelists. The choice of successors to the first apostles and evangelists in the *ecclesia* occasioned the problems coincident with a specified and duly designated or set apart ministry of the Word. The Church was where the Word was preached and the power of God was present to work the miracle of grace so that humanity was reconstituted into the community of Christ's love and life. The preaching of the faith called for order and organization among the preachers.

LIFE—DIDACHE

The Apostles not only proclaimed the Christian facts; they were concerned for the Christian-life-in-action, for a faith that was active in love. They asked themselves the significant question: 'What do men who are men "in faith" do and not do?' How does this new life in Christ look and feel? If the *kerygma* was concerned about how man stands before God, then the dimension of life before one's fellows may be called the *didache*. In Paul's Epistles we can see how the doctrinal sections develop a practical wisdom concerning inter-personal relations and responsibilities.

Often this took the form of instruction or teaching for the edification of the saints. The constituted community needed Christian guidance in moral matters and in fellowship-relations generally. The teaching of converts before baptism, especially those who came from outside Judaism, was a real concern for the *ecclesia*. The end or goal of such teaching was 'The Way', the Christian life, the common life (*koinonia*) in the Body of Christ.

The New Testament specifies teaching as a dimension of the total Christian witness through more reflective forms of traditions. The Spirit had given the 'gift of teaching' to some for this specific ministry.

The lives of the Christians were surrounded by a sea of paganism which meant that the 'spirit' must be strengthened against the things of the 'flesh'. Immediately after Pentecost it is noted that the believers 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship . . .' (Acts 2₄₂). As Jesus had taught concerning the Kingdom of God, so the Apostles taught concerning the implications of the full good news about Christ and His Kingdom, for they now knew that in Christ God had brought to fulfilment His ancient promises and purposes. The new life must take recognizable form in manifestations that were conformable to the faith. The pattern of life, the training for it and the actualization of it, required teaching. Teaching required teachers, and the charismatic gifts appeared in certain members of the community who were called teachers. Through their teaching they fashioned the Christian-life-in-action for the living community of faith. It was faith that ordered the life of the community.

ORGANIZATION—DIAKONIA

Love-in-communal-action, as a reflection of God's love in Christ which created the community, is an obvious and appealing aspect of the Christian witness. Paul speaks of love as the greatest functional mode of faith that abides within the Christian community. This is the shepherding of the flock that passes on life to the sheep, an 'abundant life' that is found only in the Good Shepherd's love and care, that is, in the mercy and love of God Himself.

The *diakonia* is that dimension of witness whereby the expressions of love were organized and made concrete. Organization was necessary as the community of faith grew and the activities of the *ecclesia* multiplied in place and in variety to facilitate the domestic exercises of brotherly love.

The men of faith had seen or had known of their Lord's ministry in mercy to the outcasts, the poor, the sick, the needy. 'Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life . . .' and this was exactly what the Lord had done. So the Body of Christ must be knit together and built up in disinterested love. First

'the Seven' and later many others were asked to be 'deacons' or servants through this witness of love. They cared for the widows and took up offerings for the poor. They were the stewards of the material possessions of the community of faith who held things in common until the Lord should come. They saw after the care and support of the apostles and prophets in their midst and of those who came among them to witness to their faith.

To them fell also the tasks of disciplining the wrong-doer in the *ecclesia* and of restoring such an offender to a right mind or spirit, and to a reconciled relationship with the Fellowship and its Centre, the Lord Jesus.

Usually the term *diakonia* refers simply to administering something—or, as a servant of the community of faith, 'ministering to the saints', as Paul calls it in Romans 15₂₅. The choice or designation of these deacons or servants for these duties was a problem of order and organization, as was the performance of the duties themselves.

WORSHIP—LEITURGIA

In this dimension of the witness we are centring upon the *ecclesia's* celebration of the drama of salvation, as acted out in ritual performances of various sorts. Obviously this is not the whole of worship, but it is a central function of worship to signify and symbolize the *present* meaning of the Christ-Event and its import of life here and now. Not only did Christians pray in their worship, they made gestures of prayer; and if they knelt or clasped their hands, this was a dimension of their witness.

Not only did they read from the Scriptures, they probably stood in gratitude and recognition that God was present and speaking. Rite and ritual, word and action, sign and symbol blended in the worship as witness. The rite that man performs is a preparing of himself in prayerful hope that the grace of God will actually encounter him.

The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism are the highest examples of this dimension of witness-through-structured-action.

The Lord's Supper is our Holy Communion with the Risen Christ, to whom and with whom we give loving thanks for the acts of God in the Incarnate Lord, especially the events of His passion as symbolized in the breaking of bread and the receiving of wine.

Some form of Baptism is the accepted entrance rite into the *ecclesia*, just as circumcision was the required rite of the covenanted community of the Old Testament. This baptismal rite is a worshipful recognition and appropriation of the redemptive act of God in Christ in the life of the one baptized. As he is received into the fellowship of the Church, baptism seals and symbolizes the new life in Christ. With its washing by water, baptism witnesses that God washes away sins and grants newness of life.

It seems to have been usual in New Testament times for baptism to have been administered by the apostles and evangelists, but it was soon accepted that the rite could be performed by any member of the *ecclesia*. The administration of the Lord's Supper involved the relationship of apostle to presbyter-bishop and the relation of this elder or overseer to the deacon.

There were other acts, such as the laying on of hands, the anointing with oil, the holy kiss symbolizing mutual fellowship in love, which all witnessed to the

new life in Christ which both characterized and fashioned the *ecclesia*. Even the sequence or order of these actions and words was a part of this dimension or witness through worship. The heart of liturgy, then, is celebration.

CONCLUSION

The common life in Christ as witnessed to by the *ecclesia* in distinct, isolated groups of worshippers found its institutional forms under the personal influence and authority of the apostles as envoys of the faith, and their 'deputies'. Differing circumstances and experiences led to varied forms of local organization and order among the men and women whom God chose through His charismatic gifts for ministry to and on behalf of the community of faith. To the Corinthians Paul wrote: 'God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then helpers, healers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues' (1 Cor. 12₂₈). To the Church at Ephesus was written: 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. . . . And his gifts were that some should be apostles; some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . .' (Eph. 4_{8, 11-12}). In all forms and through all purposes of the organization of the Church there is seen a reflection of God's relationship with men in Christ. The witness of faith and order was a witness to God's saving grace in Christ offered to men.

God's self-manifestation in Jesus Christ for the salvation of man called forth faith and the community of faith. That community was the New Israel, the people of God, called by Christ into new life through the Spirit. It was, therefore, the *ecclesia*. It was a living organism, the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the head and His Spirit is the life.

We close this brief book at the relation of faith and order in the New Testament with a figure of speech which our Lord gave us: 'I am the vine, you are the branches' (John 15₅). As we think of the Church we recognize that truly Christ is the Vine, rooted and grounded in creation and one with the Creator. The *ecclesia* is the branches which spring from the Vine. These branches are formed only by the flow of life and power, which is the Holy Spirit, through the Vine, first to form and then to sustain the branches. Upon these branches, and indeed as the purposive part of them, is the fruit which is both faith and order, or life and form. Within the fruit is seed, which represents the future and the harvest. God in Christ called forth the Church with its faith and its order that there might be spiritual fruit to the glory of the One who both plants and reaps.

Let us then be faithful and zealous workers in the Lord's Vineyard as husbandmen of the fruit, remembering in gratitude that the Vineyard is His, He gives the increase, and He is Lord of the harvest. We seek only to abide in Him that He may abide in us until the day of harvest is come and the fruit is gathered home.

GEORGE CLAUDE BAKER, Jr.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

WHATEVER we may think about the desirability and possibility of natural theology, I take it that we are agreed on the necessity of specifically Christian doctrines. Christian doctrines do not spring fully grown and equipped from the Bible, like Athena from the head of Zeus; but they have no claim to be called Christian unless their foundation is in the Bible. Nor is their development fortuitous, the mere play of historical circumstances; it takes place within the Church, which we believe to be guided by the Spirit, and the experience of the Church confirms the truth of what the Bible teaches and Christian thinkers have elaborated. Now the doctrine of the Church, the People of God, is a specifically Christian doctrine.

What we are going to attempt to do is to consider the doctrine of the Church which is implied by the teaching and practice of the Methodist Church, and I suggest that we begin by employing a historical approach. What, for instance, was John Wesley's doctrine of the Church? Remember that he formulated it, not in the void, but against the background of a certain religious and ecclesiastical situation which he had himself helped to create. He had founded the Society of People called Methodists. And what precisely was that? At the time that he came up to Oxford there were in existence a number—how large, we cannot tell—of religious societies operating within the Church of England. Most of these consisted of clergymen and laymen, and met together for religious exercises according to the *Book of Common Prayer*. It is difficult to say much more about them than this, since the evidence by the nature of the case is scanty. We may, however, add that most of them were strict and exclusive, though some may have welcomed the more amenable sort of Dissenter. The Holy Club at Oxford, we may conjecture, was a student version of such Societies. But these were not the only religious societies in existence during John Wesley's later Oxford days. The Moravians, during the decade preceding Wesley's evangelical conversion, had established religious societies of a more informal and intimate kind, and in these discussions of personal spiritual matters seem to have taken place. There were also religious societies of yet another and very different kind, closely connected with the Church of England, with a definitely evangelistic purpose and a central administration. Such were the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, under whose auspices John Wesley went to Georgia, and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.

I do not know that it can be proved that John Wesley had in mind any one of these kinds of society when he formed the Methodist Society. It seems rather that they all contributed to his thought on the matter, and that the combination, plus the original genius of John Wesley himself, produced something which was in fact unique and distinctive, though of course it must still in the language of the time be called a 'religious society'. It had a background of Anglican liturgy and practice, it had the warmth and intimacy of the Moravian gatherings, and it was an organized instrument of evangelism like the S.P.G. But it also had the special practices of the Methodists, their peculiar ethos, and their conception of scriptural holiness. The Methodist Societies were within the Church of England, as we always say; but we mean by that, not that they were authorized

by the Anglican authorities, which they certainly were not, but that they did not regard themselves as separate from the Establishment, and that they were the heirs through the Wesleys, and the other ordained clergymen who belonged to them, of a tradition which valued Anglican Churchmanship very highly and held the Church of England to be the best constituted Church in Christendom.

It is thus against a background composed of the Church of England by law established, celebrating its sacraments and other offices according to the *Book of Common Prayer* through its bishops and clergy, and at the same time of a heterogeneous group of religious societies, with the Methodist Society rapidly taking the lead in size and zeal and influence, that we must look at John Wesley's doctrine of the Church. According to him, every Christian belongs to the Church by virtue of being a Christian, for the catholic, universal Church consists of all Christians. The Christians who live in England belong to the Church of England, and this is a true Church. Wesley accepts, in a general sort of way, Article 19 of the Thirty-nine Articles, which says that the Church exists where the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered; but he criticizes it as being too exclusive. In the Church of Rome, he points out, the pure Word is not preached and the Sacraments are not duly administered; yet it would be wrong to unchurch the Church of Rome. Christians may have wrong opinions and superstitious modes of worship, but because they have the one hope and the one Lord, they belong to the one Church; and that Church is to be found wherever men have this one hope and this one Lord.

But he also says that it is correct to speak of a Church when two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, and here we come across a different strand in his thinking. This is one of many hints that he thought of true believers as a Church within a Church—*ecclesiola in ecclesia*. At least, this seems to be the inference which we must draw from his two uses of the word 'Church'. It was, in fact, difficult for him not to think in these terms, when he saw the zeal and purity of the Methodist Societies in their startling contrast to the sloth and worldliness of many members of the official Church. But in spite of this notion of the nuclear Church, he certainly never goes an inch in the direction of unchurching the Church of England, and he condemns schism in the strongest possible terms, allowing it only in the extreme case in which it is impossible to remain within the Church without committing a breach of God's commands or omitting something which He enjoins.

So we have in Wesley a *double* doctrine of the Church: of the big Church and the little Church, a fusion of Pietism and Catholicism. It was a natural and perhaps an adequate doctrine in the eighteenth century. It is not clear that it will do for today, especially in the light of the fuller knowledge of the New Testament which is now available. It can hardly be said that there is ground in the New Testament for speaking of two Churches; nor is it easy to see how the doctrine can avoid the implication that there are some élite Christians within the general body; and the spiritual arrogance and strife which may result from such an implication are easy to point out. We shall see that even this rather inadequate conception has something to say to us in our time, but let us now move on from Wesley.

Methodism was never a sect, that is, a group of people claiming a monopoly of Christian truth of life, and hiving off both from the world at large and from

oth
ists
Cat
all
Ch
eve
a S
wh
wit
the
pist
inst
Me
rule
aut
tion
from
Me
Est
and
emp
fello
and
pur
V
also
due
in e
adv
decl
indi
It w
econ
doct
ists
T
Did
Met
from
he d
ceed
to 'th
'the
Ten
then
the l
the c
squa
P

other professing Christians. There have been, and are, many sectarian Methodists, who have failed to read, or at least to digest, Wesley's sermon on the Catholic Spirit. But Methodism itself has never been a sect. In fact, it changed almost overnight from a Society within the Church of England into a substantive Church. This is manifest enough in England; it is even more manifest, if I read events aright, on the American Continent, where it was, I suppose, never really a Society, pure and simple, at all; and after the War of Independence—which is what we in Great Britain call the Revolution—it had to act wholly as a Church with full panoply of ministry, sacraments and organization. In England not all the marks of a full Church were present from the detonation of the starter's pistol in 1795 when final separation from the Church of England took place; for instance, the laying on of hands in ordination was not practised on behalf of the Methodist Conference until 1836. But ministry, sacraments, *episcopate*—pastoral rule and oversight—by the Conference, evangelism, relationship to the civil authority, willingness to co-operate with other Churches, centralized organization, were in full operation from the start. Wesleyan Methodism was known, from 1791, rather oddly, as 'the body', and, as the Interim Report on Anglican-Methodist Conversations (1958) puts it, 'the body lay curiously athwart the Establishment and Dissent'. But, of course, it retained considerable traces—and it retained them consciously and deliberately—of its Society origin: the emphasis on inward religion, the emphasis on the deep, challenging, demanding fellowship of the Society Class, which is the unit of the Church's organization and the implication of membership, and the call to every member of society to pursue personal and social holiness.

What effect had this history on Methodist doctrine? Precious little. There is, also, little sign after Wesley's time of a theology of the Church designed to give due place to the special discoveries of Methodism; the genius of Methodism lay in evangelism not in theology, as we complacently remark. Thus we have no advance on Wesley to record, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century a decline from him is evident. Methodism was at that time impelled into a purely individualistic conception of salvation which would have shocked its founders. It was impelled into it partly by the individualism of the age in its political and economic aspects, and partly by the growth of Tractarianism, which stressed the doctrine of the Church to the neglect of individual salvation, and set the Methodists agog to proclaim the love of Christ for the individual with mounting fervour.

This comes out clearly, I think, in the thought of William Burt Pope (Tutor of Didsbury College, 1867-85), whose theology was so much better than that of his Methodist contemporaries, but who yet, of course, was not wholly emancipated from the presuppositions of his age and milieu. In his *Compendium of Theology* he deals with the doctrines of 'the Nature of God' and 'the Trinity', and proceeds to 'the Redemption of Mankind through Jesus Christ'. Then he turns to 'the Administration of Redemption', under the headings of 'the Holy Spirit', 'the Gospel Vocation', 'the Preliminaries of Grace', 'the State of Salvation', 'the Tenure of Covenant Blessings', 'the Ethics of Redemption'; and then, and only then, he deals with 'the Christian Church'—which, apart from eschatology, is the last thing to be treated in the whole work. The treatment of the doctrine of the Church is, as we should expect, scriptural and comprehensive, standing squarely in the Protestant tradition, but it still appears somewhat as an extra to

the doctrines of personal salvation, rather than as a doctrine in its own right, integral to the total structure of Christian truth.

Methodism, then—and this is even more true of Primitive and United Methodism than of Wesleyan Methodism—entered the twentieth century, and survived for a considerable part of it, without a doctrine of the Church which was properly formulated within the totality of Christian doctrine, and which did justice to the special deposit of truth which the Holy Spirit has committed to us. This was so until 1937, when Conference approved a statement on the Nature of the Christian Church which was largely the work, we understand, of Dr Newton Flew, and certainly brought to bear on the subject for the first time the Biblical Theology which was emerging from the intensive study of the New Testament by the use of modern apparatus. So now, virtually for the first time, British Methodism has an official doctrine of the Church, even though it is not entirely aware of the fact and traces of the old individualism still linger on in many quarters. Twenty-one years have passed since that very important statement appeared, but it still stands in its affirmations, though of course new material has come to hand in the intervening period. We can fitly ask: what is the position in Methodism today in respect of an ecclesiology? We turn from a historical approach to a contemporary appraisal.

I have said that we retained traces both of our Society origin and of our Church origin into the nineteenth century. I now point out that we still do this today. I suspect, though I am here very much open to correction, that the 'Society' elements have always been much less prominent in the U.S.A. than in England, and on the Continent much *more* prominent; but they are to be found, in strong or weak form, wherever Methodism itself is found. In Great Britain today the Society element is probably dwindling. The emphasis on individual conversion is still there, though some would say that it is attenuated; holiness is not a word often used except in certain circles and in historical reconstructions; and the class meeting, over large areas, has virtually ceased to function. But I would claim that the idea behind the class meeting is resurgent in other forms—especially in the very rapidly growing, and, as far as I know, unique, 'groups' of the University Methodist Societies, and in all kinds of week-end conferences and summer schools for young people. Thus we still have a living tradition of Christian fellowship for which our doctrine of the Church must certainly allow. And we are now again searching for the right way to pursue scriptural holiness in our own time.

Bearing this in mind, I want to try to lay down the basic requirements for Methodist thinking about the Church as they appear to me. I shall do so by adding Methodist elements to what is already widely received as New Testament doctrine, in the belief that the Methodist additions are good New Testament doctrine too.

So far as general New Testament doctrine of the Church is concerned we in Methodism are in an especially favourable situation. We did not take up any entrenched positions respecting Church, Ministry and Sacraments before the development of modern New Testament study, and so we are not committed in advance, like the Roman Catholics, the Anglo-Catholics, and to a lesser extent the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists, to a number of propositions which are now found to be dubious. We are open, wide open, to what the New Testament has to say to us. Therefore all I need do at this particular

point is to remind you that it is now established that in the New Testament the Church is an integral part of the Gospel—not a laudable addendum—that the whole of New Testament theology, is propounded in the context of Christ's foundation of the *ecclesia*, and His presence within it, and the Church is thought of in the New Testament as 'the New Israel', 'the People of God', with all the implications of these words for those who are versed in Old Testament thought, that it is also called 'the Body of Christ', 'the Bride of Christ', 'the Temple of the Living God', and in addition 'a royal priesthood and a holy nation' (the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is *primarily* a corporate doctrine, and only secondarily an individual one), and that this Church is one Church—one Church over all the earth, extended in time as well as space, the congregation of all Christ's faithful people in heaven and on earth.

We also accept the ministry of those called by God thereto, as part of and within the Church; in fact, we see in our own ministry today the replica, or the nearest to a replica that we can manage, of those who are called both presbyters and bishops in the New Testament—though we do not urge that everyone else should accept our precise form of the ministry. We acknowledge further the principle of *episcopate*, to be very clearly distinguished from episcopacy, which is only one possible form of it; we see that in New Testament times this positive rule and oversight were necessary in the Church, and we see in our own Conference, and in Chairmen of Districts and Superintendents of Circuits, an embodiment of this sound New Testament principle. So much we can take for granted. What can we add?

(a) The first addition is not in the strict sense peculiar to us, for we received it from the Puritan tradition; but we have developed it in our own way. The Church is not just the People of God, but is the *Covenanted* People of God. This does not mean simply that each believer has a personal Covenant with God, though that is how the Covenant Service is sometimes exclusively taken, but that the whole people of God is bound to Him by a Covenant as real as, and yet deeper and wider than, the covenant made by God with Israel in Mount Sinai. The new Covenant is God's gift, sealed by the blood of Christ; it is irrevocable, for God does not withdraw His gifts; and it binds us to Him by faith, gratitude and love, and by our pledge to serve Him with all our lives. 'On one side the Covenant is God's promise that He will fulfil in and through us all that He has declared in Jesus Christ, who is the Author and Perfector of our faith. . . . On the other side we stand pledged to live no more unto ourselves, but to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.' The contractual idea of the bargain between God and man, which adheres even to the most exalted Old Testament conception, is here transcended. God and His people are bound together by the most intimate of bonds, and the prophecy of Jeremiah 31₃₁ is fulfilled.

So the relationship of Christ to His Church is personal, sealed by the act of Christ for our salvation, confirmed by the personal promise of Christ and our personal response to it. We are truly the People of God—He is our God and we are His people.

*Zion's God is all our own,
Who on His love rely;
We His pardoning love have known,
And live to Christ, and die.*

*To the new Jerusalem
 He our faithful Guide shall be:
 Him we claim, and rest in Him,
 Through all eternity.*

(MHB 699, v. i.)

It is in the light of this conception that we view the other New Testament descriptions of the Church, in particular that which calls it the Body of Christ. We do not view the notion of the People of God in the light of the description of the Church as the Body of Christ, but vice versa. That is, perhaps, another way of saying that the Body of Christ is a metaphor—a helpful, constructive, and for the Christian who is conscious of his membership, with others of different gifts, of the Catholic Church of Christ, an *indispensable* metaphor, but a metaphor. To say that the Church is literally and actually the Body of Christ, an extension of the Incarnation, as some prefer to say, imperils the covenant relationship, as well as being in danger, in some hands, of elevating the Church to a position in the Trinity.

(b) Almost entirely peculiar to us is the emphasis on fellowship—and this is the point at which John Wesley's thinking is particularly relevant. In fact, we have claimed this fellowship for ourselves for so long that we do not recognize it when it takes a slightly different form in other communions; and meanwhile we have used the word ourselves so freely and loosely that we fail to notice when the real thing disappears, or is dissolved into general matiness and reciprocal back-slapping. I know of no more revolting description of Methodism than 'the religion of the warm handshake'. Fellowship, truly understood, is a *sharing* in the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is absent, and it is only the spirit of good brotherhood that is present, there is no *Christian* fellowship. We share in the Holy Spirit; we have our portion and lot in Him; He is the source of our life and our salvation. Therefore the thing that constitutes our fellowship in the Church is not our relationship to each other—horizontally—but our relationship to the Holy Spirit—vertically. And because He imparts Himself to all of us, because it is the same Spirit who gives His gifts to each of us, we belong to each other. The Church is the company of those who belong to each other solely because the same Spirit gives Himself and His gifts to every member. And as He gives Himself to each, His power flows from one to the other, binding all together. The 'fellowship', in our usual sense of the word, that thus results shows itself most especially and intimately in small groups, for obvious reasons, but it is available to the whole company of Christ's followers; and this is surely immediately apparent when Methodists, and I hope any Christians, meet each other from many different parts of the world. When a great ecumenical conference of nearly all the great communions comes together, it is able at once to worship together, to speak together on the same basic presuppositions, and to seek a truth together which has eluded each group of Christians in its separation; this is surely the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which in Methodism we may perhaps claim to have experienced in greater measure than has been granted to other Communions.

*Head of Thy Church, whose Spirit fills
And flows through every faithful soul,
Unites in mystic love, and seals
Them one, and sanctifies the whole.*

(MHB 814, v. 1.)

(c) The third Methodist addition is a concern for the individual man-in-Christ. We have learned in our time to speak and think corporately, and to realize as a matter not of doctrine only but of experience that there is no salvation outside the Church. I think it is possible that modern trends of thought are in danger of guarding this truth so zealously that we forget its complementary truth, that we are all loved by God and saved by Jesus Christ as individual persons. This may be partly due to the dominance of the eschatological dimension in a great deal of modern theology. We speak of cosmic salvation and the cosmic Christ, of the movements of history and of the end of history, and of the consummation of all things; we say that nations and cultures and Churches are under God's judgement; and this is all true. But we are in danger of being like blood-red nature in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, 'so careful of the type, so careless of the single life'; of forgetting that the human race and each separate nation is made up of people, individuals breathing and suffering, being tempted and falling. There is not only a sinful race; there are also sinful men and women. There is not only a solidarity of sin; there is also a terrifying individuality, a scalding solitude of sin. Similarly, the Church is made up of people, individuals at various stages of spiritual development, but still sinners who have been justified and are now being sanctified. There is not only a holy Church; there are also holy men and women, or rather men and women who are being made holy. We dare not therefore jettison our concern that people should be brought one by one to Christ, our concern for personal salvation and personal holiness, but rather hold it together with and in the context of our new emphasis in the covenanted *People* of God. The reconciliation is not easy, as is abundantly clear from the persistent swing of the pendulum from excessive individualism to an excessive sense of corporateness and back again. It is the function of the class meeting, and its modern successors, not only to cultivate a deep fellowship, but also to care for every single member of the class, whatever his spiritual state may be. In this respect also we have a contribution to make to the doctrine of the Church. Charles Wesley expresses the idea with monumental and monosyllabic simplicity:

*Help us to help each other, Lord,
Each other's cross to bear,
Let each his friendly aid afford,
And feel his brother's care.*

*Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love.*

(MHB 717, vv. 1, 2.)

These are my 'prolegomena to any future Methodist doctrine of the Church', as Immanuel Kant would have said if he had come under the influence of John Wesley. But I am equally sure that anything that we might formulate on the subject would need to be enriched by what other communions have to teach us. I do not know, for instance, that we have yet fully understood the Anglican emphasis on historical continuity, or the need for its expression through outward forms of the ministry; I suspect that the relation between the Church and the sacraments is still somewhat obscure to us. I look forward to the time when the whole doctrine of the Church will be revealed to a united Church. Meanwhile, let us be very sure that we preserve what has been revealed to us, neither assimilating ourselves too readily or too completely to other forms of Christian thought, nor boasting too much about our own; but always willing both to learn and teach with equal humility, acknowledging that we have often scorned the heritage of other Churches and abused our own. And 'if we be otherwise minded may God grant that this also may be revealed to us'.

RUPERT E. DAVIES

CAN THE DISTINCTIVE METHODIST EMPHASIS BE SAID TO BE ROOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

THE SUBJECT is bristling with difficulties. Is it, by any unlucky chance, a possible after-thought, that, having discussed and established the character of our distinctive emphasis, we feel in duty bound to make sure that this is, after all, in accordance with the Scriptures? We are all too familiar with the practice of finding the text after the sermon is written. How much, in this case, does it matter to us whether or not the sermon has a text? Does it weigh on our minds sufficiently to make us 'Bible-conscious' in theology and churchmanship?

Next, what is the distinctive Methodist emphasis? Can we take it for granted that there is common agreement upon a list of items represented in our programme here at Oxford, containing Justification and Sanctification, Assurance and Perfection, Witness of the Spirit and Priesthood of all Believers, Fellowship of Worship and Service and Universal Mission of the Church, Grace free in all and for all? And can this list be narrowed down to an irreducible basic minimum, bearing in mind that our venerable father and founder could at different

times point to different doctrines as the grand deposit of Methodism,¹ the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*?²

Finally, in what sense is our emphasis said to be 'rooted' in the New Testament? Do we mean (Wesley uses this category) 'prescribed' by the New Testament,³ or consistent with the New Testament, or analogous to the New Testament? Is it a matter of proof-texts or of what is nowadays called 'biblical insights'? I shall not presume to dispose of all these questions within the next twenty minutes. I merely want to indicate that I am aware of them. And having confessed my perplexity, I invite you to turn with me directly to Wesley.

Someone challenged him that 'singularities are your most beloved opinions and favourite tenets, more insisted upon by you than the general and uncontroverted truths of Christianity'; he answered:

And so, I doubt, it will be to the end of the world; for in spite of all I can say, they will represent one circumstance of my doctrine (so called) as the main substance of it. . . . 'No singularities' is not my answer; but that no singularities are my most beloved opinions; that no singularities are more, or near as much, insisted upon by me as the general, uncontroverted truths of Christianity.⁴

So much for his initial interest in any kind of 'distinctive Methodist emphasis'! You note that he can go so far as to say 'my doctrine (so called)'—recalling Karl Barth's early description of his own theology as merely '*ein bisschen Zimt zur Speise*'. The whole point at Aldersgate and Mr Bray's house in London is that the decisive discovery of the Wesleys is made from the sacred text itself and that their charge against the mother Church, in terms of Galatians 1, reinforced by the Articles and Homilies, is plainly the loss of her New Testament roots, the removal into another gospel.⁵ Maybe their charge today would, in the same terms, have to turn against the Methodist people; they would certainly say that apart from the New Testament roots no Methodist emphasis is worth maintaining; if we have lost those roots, we have lost our *raison d'être* as a Church.

Take the issue of Christian Perfection. 'The opinion I have concerning it at present', says Wesley, 'I espouse because I think it scriptural. If therefore I am convinced it is not scriptural, I shall willingly relinquish it.'⁶ On the other hand, when William Law insists upon a certain speculative detail in his doctrine of the New Birth, Wesley retorts: 'Neither can I believe this till I find it in the Bible.'⁷ This is typical, and it is central. The famous letter to James Hervey, one of his old pupils here at Lincoln College, which describes the world as his parish, has this solemn self-defence: 'If by catholic principles you mean any other than scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures; but on scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me. . . .'⁸ Whether it applies to doctrine, or to church polity, such as the itinerant 'Plan', or to the historic step of ordaining the preachers for America—in every case Wesley acts not 'as a Methodist' in his own right, but, as he preferred to be called, a 'Bible Christian' (and in the last of these instances as a 'scriptural Bishop').⁹ 'God in Scripture commands me' remains the key-note throughout his lifetime. So it was the distinctive Methodist emphasis which prompted the late Dr Ryder Smith to write all his books under the title '*The Bible Doctrine of—*' Sin, Grace, Man, Salvation, and the Hereafter.

At least on paper, the Methodist Church, on either side of the Atlantic, has remained faithful to this. Our doctrinal standards are still Wesley's Sermons and Notes, written into the constitution of British Methodism, sanctioned by the American General Conference of 1808, enforced on the mission field; and these are exegetical documents. We can, in fact, boast this as our distinction among our ecumenical partners, that our theological position is defined, not in confessions and not primarily in articles of religion, but in two sets of expositions of the New Testament. To these we must add the less official, but no less important source of the Wesley hymns. Volumes of them appear quite specifically as 'short hymns on select passages of Scripture'; these still serve the preacher in his study of the text as well as the congregation in the reception of the message, and this, of course, is true of the whole of Charles Wesley's hymnody. More than one of us has discovered that in the preaching of the Gospel the Notes become his standard dictionary, as the Hymns become his standard accompaniment, and he really cannot do without either.

In the Methodist standards are embodied the principles of the Protestant Reformation—above all, the one fundamental principle of the Church's perpetual reformation by the Word of God. This has an active and a passive meaning; it is the criterion by which the Wesleys judge the Reformers and by which they themselves stand judged. What they have to say in criticism of their ancestors is essentially a reminder of certain New Testament passages that Luther and Calvin were apt to overlook or to qualify; for example, from Romans 7 we have to go on to Romans 8, and in Romans 8 to follow the turn 'if children, then heirs', and again: 'whom He justified, them He also glorified'. Thus the progress in Church history is progress in biblical exposition. What we, in turn, have to say in criticism of Wesley must likewise be rooted in the New Testament if it is to be valid at all; and so far we have said very little. His doctrine of perfection, for instance, has been found wanting on various philosophical, ethical, social and psychological counts; nobody has yet undertaken to hold it up in the light of the First Epistle of John and of the whole framework of the peculiar biblical categories such as the perfect man in the Old Testament, the perfection of Christ, the perfect disciple and the hour of perfection. The absence of New Testament references in nearly all our modern restatements of Methodist doctrine is a telling—Wesley would say a shocking—fact.

Now, what about our distinctive emphasis? First of all, is it emphasis in the singular or emphases in the plural? There is peril in both, but the singular which appears in the authorized version of my assignment is undoubtedly the lesser risk. Even so, it is an unhappy word and one which in our current usage is fraught with quite grave ecumenical implications. It seems to suggest that Methodism is quite content to represent an 'emphasis' which it would like to see preserved within 'the coming great Church'; and where other traditions defend a doctrine, all we have to contribute is, in the end, 'evangelical fervour'. This reduction from substance to attitude indicates the direction in which most of our customary attempts at self-definition are tending to move. The very name of Methodism lends support to this. We are supposed to stand for a certain method in the order of salvation¹⁰ and in the order of Church life; and the test we must pass is not one of orthodoxy, but of efficiency. Again, experience is the thing that counts and that must be accounted for in the life of every

Methodist. 'If a man is to be a Christian', says Kierkegaard, 'it is doubtless requisite for him to be quite definite that *he* believes. In the same degree that thou dost direct attention exclusively to the definite things a man must believe, in that same degree dost thou get away from faith.'¹¹ Take this sentence in isolation, with its heavy emphasis on the second requisite, and subjectivism becomes the Methodist Creed; this is, in fact, what has happened wherever Wesley has been interpreted through the eyes of Schleiermacher, of Personalism, or of Existentialism. It 'has left Methodism', in the words of Stanley Hopper, 'open both to the scientific criticism of liberal theology and the more stringent, if strident, prophetism of the theology of crisis';¹² it has, in the words of another critic, 'rendered the church peculiarly vulnerable to the infiltration of alien ideologies', so that it 'most readily aligned itself with pietistic sectarianism and thus reinforced that strain of its constitution which leaned toward moralistic and emotionalistic individualism'.¹³ The most popular of those alien ideologies which has triumphed in our midst is the replacement of what Wesley knew as total depravity by what Outler has called teetotal depravity; this is commonly believed to be our dominant distinctive emphasis, but it will be hard to find it rooted in the New Testament.

We have come a long way from John Wesley! Neither in content nor in form would he recognize our traditional Methodist emphases as his. Would he recognize any? We are back, then, where we began, with his disclaimer of all 'singularities'. This has been interpreted as saying that Methodism has no doctrine. What it means is that Methodism has no pet doctrine; it goes out for the whole of the New Testament. In other words, the only possible thing to single out from the New Testament, in the name of Wesley, is paradoxically, its fulness; it is 'the genuine gospel of present salvation through faith, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, declaring present, free, full justification, and enforcing every branch of inward and outward holiness'.¹⁴ Rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2₁₅) is, for Wesley, 'duly explaining and applying the whole scripture, so as to give each hearer his due portion. But they that give one part of the Gospel to all, have real need to be ashamed'.¹⁵ Sound doctrine, hygiene of the Gospel, according to the Pastoral Epistles, implies that the health of the Church depends, very literally, on the right mixture.

Fulness of the Gospel, then, is the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel; it is the belief that 'all the promises of God are yea in Him, and amen in Him, to the glory of God by us' (2 Cor. 1₂₀). As Wesley comments in the Notes: 'they are yea with respect to God promising; amen, with respect to men believing; yea, with respect to the apostles; amen, with respect to the hearers'. 'Ay and No too', says King Lear, 'was no good divinity'.¹⁶ Wesley heartily agrees. Nothing is more characteristic of him than his aversion from all dialectic at the central point. When Zinzendorf claims that 'a believer is never sanctified or holy in himself, but in Christ, only; he has no holiness in himself at all', Wesley impatiently replies:

What a heap of palpable self-contradiction, what senseless jargon is this! Does a believer love God, or does he not? If he does, he has the love of God in him . . . you cannot therefore deny that every believer has holiness in, though not from, himself; else you deny that he is holy at all; and if so, he cannot see the Lord.¹⁷

It is of the essence of the Gospel that He who calls us is faithful to do it (1 Thess. 5₂₄); as His Word is promise fulfilled in Christ, so the testament of Christ in turn is fulfilled in the Holy Spirit. For the practice of preaching, this means that 'if we could once bring all our preachers, itinerant and local, uniformly and steadily to insist on those two points: "Christ dying for us" and "Christ reigning in us", we should shake the trembling gates of hell'.¹⁸

'*Te totum applica ad textum; rem totam applica ad te*', wrote Bengel in the Preface to his *Greek New Testament Manual*, and we still find his words on the first page of our Nestlé editions. We can see the importance of his 'manner of applying' when we recall the passage in Luther's commentary on Galatians (2₂₀) which was instrumental in Charles Wesley's conversion:

Who loved me and gave himself for me. . . . Wherefore these words WHO LOVED ME are full of faith. And he that can utter this word ME, and apply it unto himself with a true and constant faith, as Paul did, shall be a good disputant against the law. And this manner of applying is the very true force and power of faith. Read, therefore, with great vehemence these words ME and FOR ME, and so inwardly practise with thyself that thou, with a sure faith, mayest conceive and print this ME in thy heart, and apply it unto thyself, not doubting but thou art in the number of those to whom this ME belongeth.¹⁹

Bengel follows this with a piece of practical advice to every reader of the Gospel:

Are you reading these various stories wrapped up in their peculiar circumstances? Wrap yourself up in similar circumstances, and when, for example, it is written HE CALLETH THEE, (Mark 10₄₉) then think, Jesus is calling you; or dismiss the circumstances from your own mind, and you will immediately have a general truth.²⁰

Leaving for a moment the phrase 'general truth' (a thorn in the flesh, I know, for some of us), it seems to me that Bengel's illustration gives us in a nutshell quite literally 'all there is to' his and Wesley's biblicism; it is nothing but a very direct, personal and faithful 'manner of applying' the great PRO ME of the New Testament.

Only with the *New Testament* can this be done. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1₁₇). Luther once said, '*lex verbum dei ad nos, evangelium verbum dei in nos*'.²¹ A free rendering of this might be that by the word of the Law God addresses us (the German *An-spruch*), by the word of the Gospel He enters in (*Zu-spruch*). We can immediately think of numerous Charles Wesley lines in which it is the burning concern that He should not remain outside, 'nor visit as a transient guest',²² but make His abode with us. This takes us to the heart of the matter. The much-invoked Hebrew Christian viewpoint, the encounter of human I and divine Thou, the *vis-à-vis* of creature and Creator—all this is not sufficient, neither is it evangelical (I remember William Temple's remark: 'I thought I knew all this in the nursery'); it still belongs to the stony tables of Moses, to the mount that might be touched, to the glory which was to be done away. Wesley's whole emphasis falls upon those passages in which the first covenant is made old (Heb. 8₁₃): the Epistle to the Hebrews—to which we must return shortly—the third chapter of 2 Corinthians, and, of course, the mentioning of the New Testament by our Lord Himself at the Last Supper. At the same time, Law and Gospel are not left, as in other traditions, in pure static antithesis; the impasse between nomism and

antinomianism is overcome by the régime of the Spirit which inaugurates the new dispensation. This is precisely what, according to Jeremiah's prophecy (31_{31ff.}), distinguishes the new covenant from the old; and the promise is fulfilled in the Gospel. The Covenant Service, Methodism's one significant contribution to the liturgical treasures of the universal Church, spells this out in practical terms. If even this idea is not originally Wesley's, if the covenanters, as it were, used the music first, still the key remains characteristically different:

*Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above,
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of love.*²³

So much for the New Testament *versus* the Old; and now the central notion of testament. The very title page of the book says what it is—not just event and invasion, narrative and record, drama and decision, but testament, legacy, last will and bequest, '*verbum dei in nos*', entry of the living Christ into the heart of the believer and the body of the Church, so that we are no longer outsiders and onlookers, but joint-heirs with Him, and that faith's concern is not with past history, but with the real presence of Jesus. If this is the treasure which the New Testament has to offer, the only proper theological question is: 'And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?', and the only possible answer is:

*He only can the words apply
Through which we endless life possess;
And deal to each his legacy,
His Lord's unutterable peace.*²⁴

This is the question asked and the answer given by Wesley. His whole concern is: how do I inherit under the testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? All his characteristic verbs—write, stamp, seal, open, prove, apply, inherit—have to do with the making of the testament, and the outcome of it is the 'partaker of Christ' (Heb. 3₁₄). Note the prominence of this term in the Communion Service, itself the embodiment of the New Testament: 'so shall ye be partakers of this holy sacrament . . . that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom . . . that receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine, we may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood.' It is the language of the Prayer Book, of course, which has shaped Wesley's own diction and which in turn is steeped in the spirit and the letter of the English Bible. 'Divinity', says Melancthon, 'is nothing but a grammar of the language of the Holy Ghost.'²⁵

Grouped round this centre, the several books of the canon fall naturally into a systematic order—but I shall not attempt to develop that now. Let two general observations suffice before we turn to details. First: Wesley would, of course, demand more from the theologian than that his vocabulary and categories should be genuinely biblical (in his case, we think, they are); he would want to be satisfied that a man's whole system was scriptural Christianity, scriptural holiness and the Scripture way of salvation. Secondly: the respect for the system of the New Testament which he shares with Bengel does in no way detract

from the necessity of giving chapter and verse for a theological statement; otherwise it is just not rooted at all in the New Testament. By their texts ye shall know them. The moderns find Wesley extremely irksome at this point, and when he starts to quote his texts, their fashionable way of begging the question is: 'We must see this in the total context. . . .' But you cannot thus evade the force of the Word, and the reminder is quite superfluous in the case of one who all the time is so close to the centre of the 'total context'. The famous recurrent entry in the *Journal*, 'I opened my testament upon . . .',²⁶ can neither be dismissed as simple 'proof text' nor be disapproved because of the manifest possibility of abuse; it is directly in line with the 'manner of applying' of which we have spoken, with the belief in present, free, full salvation, with the conviction that 'the Lord has still more truth to break forth from His holy word', with the 'exceeding great and precious promises' of 2 Peter 1₄ on which Wesley's eye fell on the morning of 24th May:

*I rest upon Thy word;
The promise is for me;
My succour and salvation, Lord,
Shall surely come from Thee.*²⁷

There is time only for the briefest survey as we go through the New Testament now to see how the fulness of the Gospel is reflected in Wesley's distinctive emphasis. We could begin at the beginning, with Jesus preaching that the kingdom of God is at hand; and Wesley would make 'repent ye, and believe the Gospel' the key-note of his own message, would underline the 'at hand' (see the prominence of 'now, now' in the hymns) and would be conscious of the important transition, even at this early point, from the dawn of John the Baptist's proclamation to the marvellous light of Jesus Christ. Take next the Sermon on the Mount and its exposition in the *Standard Sermons*; for Wesley this is not problem, but promise, applicable not only to the Apostles, the first Christians, the Ministers of Christ, but to the generality of men; 'Lord have mercy upon us, and help us to obtain this blessing'. He would have agreed with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship* in the three fundamental presuppositions: first that he who claims for himself the comfortable words, taking the place of publicans and sinners, must also accept the call to the apostles, 'Follow me'; second, that only he who believes obeys, only he who obeys believes; third, that those pronounced 'blessed' in the Beatitudes are the same who, in the conclusion of Matt. 7, are known by their fruits and owned by their Master. Promise and command are bound together in the hearing and doing of the Word. That is the synoptic basis of Wesley's practical Christianity. And that is why, having heard that 'thy sins are forgiven thee', he always insists on the sequence: 'go and sin henceforth no more'.

The fourth Gospel takes us a step further and accentuates still more markedly the beginning of the new dispensation; there is the new wine at Cana, the new birth of Nicodemus, the new worship and the new manna. John the Baptist is left behind in the following of the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. And every Johannine move is traced by Wesley—the invitation 'come and see' (that which he would call 'experimental knowledge'); the advancement of the disciples from servants to friends (or, in Pauline and Wesleyan language, from

bondage to adoption); the assurance of the abiding presence of Christ, of which we have spoken already, in them that keep His Word; and the confidence which takes Christ at His word, whether it be in the prayer of faith ('hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name') or the *imitatio Christi* in His wondrous works ('he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do'). All this is in order that 'my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full' (John 15₁₁)—another aspect of the fulness of the Gospel. He who forgives us those things whereof our conscience is afraid is the same who gives us those good things which we are not worthy to ask;²⁸ and the distinctive Methodist emphasis is never to be content with the one without boldly proceeding to the other.

This places Wesley within the true apostolic succession and makes him claim those parts of the New Testament heritage which conventional exegesis would confine to the privileges of the primitive Church. 'Lord, we believe to us and ours the apostolic promise given.'²⁹ The Acts of the Apostles becomes the textbook of 'normal' Church life, and Wesley's *Journal* (R. E. Chiles has demonstrated this³⁰) is as much a running commentary on it as his letters are on the Pauline Epistles—not only in such 'running' parallels as that of the itinerant ministry, but very much in the fundamentals. Boldness, *parrhesia*, is the operative word. The Spirit of promise fills the life of the community as well as of the individual believer; so that it becomes the order of the day to find people full of grace and truth, full of good works, full of joy, and full of the Holy Ghost. With the Articles and Homilies Wesley defines the Church as the 'congregation of faithful men in which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered'; but his concern, beyond the purity of preaching and administration, is the establishment of the 'congregation of faithful men' after the apostolic pattern. 'To Thy church the pattern give; Show how true believers live.'³¹ The gathering of the Methodist societies, with its underlying concept of membership, discipline and mission, the insistence upon the question 'What must I do to be saved?' and the calm expectation that the Lord adds daily to the Church such as should be saved—all this goes back to the Acts of the Apostles.

When we touch upon St Paul (and more than that we cannot do here), we stand, of course, at the gate through which Wesley entered into the understanding of the saving faith. Let a rapid one-minute course through Romans suffice to illustrate how in each chapter thoughts and phrases are underlined and 'brought out' through the Methodist preaching. 1₁₆₋₁₇ 'The just shall live by faith'—the cardinal doctrine of justification. 2₂₉ 'Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter'—the theme of Wesley's great sermon and the basis for his distinction between the true and the false Church. 3₃₁ 'The law established by faith'—another standard sermon, defending the Reformation safeguard against the abuses of Antinomianism. 5₈ 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost'—Pentecost exemplified in the Aldersgate experience. 7₂₄ 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'—the believer seeking for full redemption, and the sweet singer of Methodism longing to 'shout our great deliverer's praise'. 8₁₆ 'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit'—the answer to the cry of Chapter 7 in the twofold witness of assurance, and the move, in the same context, from 'bondage' to 'adoption'.

10₆₋₈ 'the word is nigh thee'—the search of the Oxford days, heaven of speculation or abyss of mystical experience, is ended through the revelation of the nearby Christ in the written and preached word. 10₁₄₋₁₅ 'How shall they hear without a preacher, how shall they preach, except they be sent?'—the latent prayer of eighteenth-century England answered in the raising of the Wesleys by God Himself, and the warrant for the evangelical mission of Methodism. 11₂₂ 'If thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off'—Wesley's fight against the Calvinist notion of the 'final perseverance of the saints', and his insistence upon the daily need of applying Christ's merit. 11₃₂ 'Concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all'—the other side of the Calvinist controversy: Christ died for all. 12₁ 'That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice'—the response to Christ's self-offering in the Eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley. 13₈ 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another'—the self-giving, introduced in the previous passage, culminates in the doctrine of perfect love. 14₁₋₁₅ 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak'—the Magna Charta of tolerance in Methodism, and the still needed 'caution against bigotry'. 15₁₈₋₂₁ 'Nothing which Christ hath not wrought by me . . . not where Christ was named. . . . I have fully preached the Gospel'—here is, in a nutshell, Wesley's doctrine of the ministry which takes its authority directly from the living Christ, addresses its commission specifically to 'those who are without', and glories in the *plerophoria*, the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel (15₂₈).

Turn from here, still more rapidly, to the General Epistles: Hebrews with its back to the Old Testament, its orientation toward the new Mediator, the new priesthood, the new Jerusalem, the better promises and the better inheritance by which alone we can be justified and made perfect (note that in these all-important verbs the New Testament becomes operative); James with its pedestrian yet inevitable correction of that 'Solifidianism' which Wesley found in Zinzendorf and rashly ascribed to Luther; Peter with the power of the resurrection working in the Church militant here on earth and, in the second epistle, the longing of the pilgrims for the rising of the morning-star (all this echoed in the trials of Wesley's early preachers and the hymns which his brother made them sing); but above all, 1 John, which holds him for ever in its grip—here is the perfect love which casteth out fear; here are the comfortable words for those who confess their sins and the uncomfortable texts about the reborn who cannot sin; here is the two-fold test for all 'real Christians' through the Spirit that confesses the incarnate Christ and the love that serves Him in the brethren; here is the Wesleyan note of assurance in the repeated 'hereby we know'; and here again, as in John's Gospel, the end of it all is 'that your joy may be full'.

What can we say as Methodists about the last book of the New Testament canon? Wesley thought, of course, with Bengel that all the beasts from the abyss were the various popes of Rome, though he was not so sure as Bengel that the millennium would begin in 1836. I trust that our distinctive emphasis is not rooted in those few pages where for once the interpretation of our fathers went so manifestly wrong. There is still enough meat among the bones for us even in the Revelation of St John. Let us take one final look at the seven pastoral letters in Chapters 2 and 3 and see how the witness of the Wesleys responds to what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Charles's famous *An Epistle to the Reverend*

Mr John Wesley³² may be quoted as a commentary at this point. The prophetic alarm sounded by the evangelical revival comes to the mother Church of England almost verbatim in the terms which are addressed here to the seven ancient churches: I know thy works; I have against thee; repent; do the first works. While the official Church can become the synagogue of Satan, having the name that thou livest and art dead, there are yet the few names which have not defiled their garments; there is the divine recognition of thy works, and charity, and service, and faith; the promise: thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name; the task: be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. It is not difficult for us to picture the little Methodist chapel today as we read these words; both threat and hope apply to our situation now as much as 200 and 2,000 years ago. At the heart of it is the Gospel: because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation. And there is a Wesley hymn for each single picture of the New Testament inheritance with which we began and with which the seven letters end: the open door for the Word and the abiding pillar in God's temple; the hidden manna and the white stone; the crown of life and the new name; the white robe, the morning star and the seat with Christ on His throne. This is for him who overcometh, and if it is said to or by one particular Church, it is only in order that all the Churches shall know. The distinctive Methodist emphasis has no other function but to annotate the Gospel in its fulness and to help us in our own day to be more alive, more faithful to what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

FRANZ HILDEBRANDT

¹ *Letters*, VIII.238; the doctrine of perfection.

² *Works* (Jackson Edition), V.15: the doctrine of salvation by faith. Cf. also *Letters*, II.63f.: 'Therefore the distinguishing doctrines on which I do insist in all my writings and in all my preaching will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in Perceptible Inspiration. For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are called Methodist Preachers.'

³ In connexion with diocesan episcopacy. See *Letters*, III.182 and 201.

⁴ *Charles Wesley's Journal*, 17th May 1738.

⁵ *Works*, XI.430.

⁶ *Letters*, II.49.

⁷ *Letters*, III.357.

⁸ *ibid.*, I.285.

⁹ *ibid.*, VII.284 and 262.

¹⁰ A typical example of this brand of Methodism is found in the autobiographical data of the Rev. Hezekiah Calvin Wooster (quoted in Herbert Asbury, *A Methodist Saint*, New York, 1927, p.222): 'Born, May 20, 1771; convicted of sin, October 9, 1791; born again, December 1, 1791; sanctified, February 6, 1792.'

¹¹ From *Christian Discourses*, translated by Walter Lowrie, New York, 1939, p.248. I owe this quotation to Dean Stanley Hopper.

¹² *Drew Gateway*, 1958, p.115.

¹³ Paul S. Sanders in *Church History*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, December 1957, p.18.

¹⁴ *Letters*, III.228. Cf. also the summary in *Works*, VI, 281: 'Between 50 and 60 years ago, God raised up a few young men, in the University of Oxford, to testify these grand truths, which were then little attended to: "That without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do; that He doeth it of His own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ; that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ; enabling us to walk as He also walked; that no man can be thus sanctified, till he be justified; and that we are justified by faith alone."'

¹⁵ *Notes on the New Testament*, 2 Timothy 2.15.

¹⁶ *King Lear* Act IV, Scene 6.

¹⁷ *Works*, X.203.

¹⁸ *Letters*, VI.134.

¹⁹ Weimar Edition XL.1.297-9.

²⁰ Oscar Wächter, *Johann Albrecht Bengel*, Stuttgart, 1865, p.58.

²¹ Weimar Edition, IV.9.27ff. ²² *British Methodist Hymn Book* 280.3; cf. Jeremiah 14.8-9.

²³ *MHB* 550.5.

²⁴ *MHB* 275.4.

²⁵ *Corpus Reformatorum*, VII.576.

²⁶ *Letters*, II.245: 'At some rare times, when I have been in great distress of soul, or in utter uncertainty how to act in an important case which required a speedy determination, after using all other means that occurred, I have cast lots or opened the Bible. And by this means I have been relieved from that distress or directed in that uncertainty.'

²⁷ *MHB* 542.4.

²⁸ Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

²⁹ *MHB* 274.1.

³⁰ In the Tipple Lectures given at Drew University, 1956—so far unpublished.

³¹ No. 495 in the 1780 *Hymn Book*.

³² *Poetical Works of J. and C. Wesley*, VI.55ff.

WESLEY'S DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS¹

INTRODUCTION

TWO DANGERS connected with any consideration of the doctrine of the Last Things are isolation and exaggeration. On the one hand, it is fatally easy to isolate this doctrine from the whole Christian belief, which results in a wrong emphasis; on the other hand, by extracting references to the belief from the whole thought of a writer, one can easily give the impression that this belief was overwhelmingly significant, to the exclusion of all else. We shall do well to keep in mind these two dangers as we consider Wesley's views on eschatology.

There is no doubt that eschatology was an important matter to Wesley. 'I want to know one thing', he writes in the Preface to the Sermons, 'the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore' (W. V.2).² Again, 'How deeply are you concerned to inquire, "What is the foundation of my hope?" "Whereon do I build my expectation of entering into the Kingdom of heaven?"' (S. 33, III.1.). And we notice that in the first section of the 1780 Hymn-book, in which the main theme is 'Exhorting sinners to return to God', there are four groups of hymns which refer to the 'Last Things'—namely, 'death' 'judgement' 'Heaven' and 'Hell'. This arrangement shows the place Wesley gave to these subjects in the introductory stage of his presentation of religion.

Alongside this must be set the very great emphasis Wesley placed on *present* salvation. He was far from limiting his view of religion to future bliss. At the beginning of *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* he writes: 'By those words "we are saved by faith" we mean, that the moment a man receives that faith . . . he is saved from doubt and fear and sorrow of heart, by a peace that passes all understanding; from the weariness of a wounded spirit, by joy unspeakable; and from his sins, of whatsoever kind they were, from his vicious desires, as well as words and actions, by the love of God and of all mankind then shed abroad in his heart' (W. VIII.10). Notice that there is here no mention of being saved in the future; all applies to this life. This emphasis on the present is admirably set out in the sermon preached before the Humane Society, in which the value of life as an opportunity to see God is much emphasized. This is also expressed in the form that we now describe as 'realized eschatology', in the sermon on Christian Perfection. The Kingdom of Heaven does not mean the Kingdom of Glory 'as if the Son of God had just discovered to us that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man on earth' (S. 40, II.8.). The Kingdom of Heaven is that Kingdom of God on earth, whereunto all true believers in Christ, all real Christians, belong. 'The Kingdom of God is now set up on earth' (ibid. II.13), and again, 'We shall be saved from our sins, not only at death, but in this world' (ibid. II.27).

Nevertheless, Wesley leaves his readers and hearers in no doubt that man has an eternal destiny; it is not simply a matter of making the most of this present life, but much more of living here and now in a way that befits those whose existence is not limited to this world. This is expressed forcibly in the *Earnest Appeal*: 'What art thou, even in thy present state? an everlasting spirit going to God' (W. VIII.18). 'I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf: till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen: I drop into an unchangeable eternity' (Intro. to St. S. VI). The wise man, who

builds his house upon the rock, 'Knows the world: the place in which he is to pass a few days or years, not as an inhabitant, but as a stranger and sojourner, on his way to the everlasting habitations' (S. 33, II.2). It is impossible to read Wesley's sermons and tracts without being aware that for him the eternal destiny of man was the ground of the urgency of his writing and speaking. And we are bound to notice how closely this is combined with concern for this present life. Wesley cannot be charged with any false interest in the future state which leaves out of account the responsibilities and privileges of this present life. Indeed, he issues a warning on this very point. 'We may take too much thought for the morrow, so as to neglect the improvement of today. We may so expect perfect love as not to use that which is already shed abroad in our hearts . . . They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received' (Sermon 42, 'Satan's Devices', I.11).

THE ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE DOCTRINE

(a) *The immortality of the human spirit.* We have already noticed that Wesley asserted the eternal destiny of man. The metaphysical basis of this is worked out more fully in Sermon 54 on the Eternity of God. Here Wesley considers the application of 'eternal' to creatures and concludes that both material and spiritual creations are eternal *a parte post*—that is, in the sense of an eternity which is to come. Only God is eternal also in sense of *a parte ante*, the eternity which is past. Matter as well as spirits, once created, cannot be destroyed; but it can change its nature, different particles being combined together in different ways. Therefore it is certain that all spirits are clothed with immortality. This necessarily implies that human spirits live for ever, either in everlasting happiness or everlasting misery. This destiny is fixed by the choice of man. Wesley vigorously rejects any suggestion of a Calvinist strain, which would imply that our destiny is fixed otherwise than by our choice:

*No dire decree of thine did seal
Or fix th' unalterable doom;
Consign my unborn soul to hell,
Or damn me from my mother's womb. (S. 54, 14)*

The sphere of choice is this present life. There is no suggestion of a second choice after death; such an idea would be completely contrary to Wesley's main views of immortality, and in any case this is a speculative question with which he does not deal. Wesley further asserts on this point that there can be no neutrality between happiness and misery. The choice which man must make in this life is final and irrevocable; no midway position is possible.

(b) *The death of Christ makes heaven possible.* The faith through which we are saved is 'a faith in Christ—It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality' (S. 1, I.5). Charles Wesley has put this same thought into Hymn 43, v. 2.

*Numbered among thy people, I
Expect with joy thy face to see;
Because thou didst for sinners die,
Jesus, in death remember me.*

(c) *Good and evil angels.* Wesley firmly believed in the existence of angels: some are good, some evil; they are actively engaged in good or evil works (S. 71). Angels are everywhere, but they do not fill all things, as God does. Wesley did not accept the view that everyone has his own angel, nor that people become angels after death. Angels are rather 'the highest order of created things' (S. 72). Bad angels are fallen good angels; Wesley conjectures that possibly one third of good angels fell, but he does not attempt to explain how or why this happened. Evil angels are the cause of many troubles, including illness, and Wesley specifically mentions nervous illness as probably caused by evil angels. What are called accidents are also possibly their work. Souls in the intermediate state after death may be actively engaged in good or evil works, helping the angels; but they do not become angels, who, as we have seen, are regarded as a separate and higher order of creation.

LIFE AND DEATH

(a) *Life.* There are two main emphases in Wesley's thought about life, and they are not easy to reconcile. On the one hand, as we have seen when considering present salvation, life is good. In the sermon preached before the Humane Society (S. 99), Wesley emphasizes the intrinsic value of human life, which makes it eminently worth saving from sudden or premature death. Those who restore to life persons who are apparently dead—that is, by the use of artificial respiration in the case of a person rescued from drowning—are not only providing a further opportunity for repentance; they are restoring something which is intrinsically good. The responsibility of a father, the happiness of a home, are good things. Because life is good and worth saving, Christians and men of goodwill are urged to support the Society. In passing, we may note what a good model this is of how the gospel can be preached on these official and sometimes rather formal occasions.

But, on the other hand, life is regarded as a dream, from which at death we awake to the full reality of eternity. This is the full significance of the lines we still sing—

*Our life is a dream, Our time as a stream
Glides swiftly away.
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay. (H. 45)*

This hymn is placed in the group entitled 'Concerning Death' in the 1780 Hymn-book. This view of life is fully expounded in Sermon 121. The real existence of heaven, says Wesley, is bitter to those who are still asleep, that is, living in the flesh. His caustic comment on one who said 'he had no relish for sitting on a cloud all day and singing praises to God', was: 'We may easily believe him, and there is no danger of his being put to that trouble!' Wesley vividly describes the emptiness and vanity of this dream, and urges his hearers to realize that when it is over, all the things they have striven for will appear in reality as insubstantial as events and things experienced in a dream.

The reconciling of these two views of life is seen when, at the end of this sermon, Wesley shows the way to prepare for waking from the dream. The way is to connect earth and heaven now, which is possible to man because God has already connected heaven and earth in the incarnation of His Son.

(b) *Death*. Some would say that Wesley was morbidly interested in death. He is certainly not afraid of mentioning it, but whether this is morbid or not depends upon one's point of view. The inevitable fact of death is something about which Wesley reminded his followers, and about which they sang:

*The year rolls round and steals away
The breath which first it gave:
Whate'er we do, where'er we be,
We're travelling to the grave.* (H. 40, 3)

Whether we like to be reminded of it or not, this is about the most certain fact of life! This serious attitude to death is of course occasioned by the firm belief that death marks the end of man's possibility of choice of happiness or misery. The early Methodists were not being morbid when they sang:

*Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies.* (H. 42, 5)

They were expressing a living truth, which transformed their funeral services into real occasions of rejoicing. Imagine a congregation today singing this at a funeral:

*Again we lift our voice
And shout our solemn joys!
Cause of highest raptures this,
Raptures that shall never fail,
See a soul escaped to bliss,
Keep the Christian festival.* (H. 51, 1)

Perhaps we should agree that Wesley's poetic genius ran away with him in the lines:

*Ah lovely appearance of death!
What sight upon earth is so fair?
Not all the gay pageants that breathe
Can with a dead body compare.* (H. 47, 1)

But there is no doubt that these hymns on death did encourage thought about the bliss into which the deceased had entered, and gave no encouragement for the self-pity of the mourners which is so often evident nowadays. Without being irreverent, perhaps I can wonder what variety of meaning could be put into some lines from a hymn 'On the Death of a Widow':

*The soul hath o'ertaken her mate,
And caught him again in the sky.* (H. 52, 2)

Some spouses, one suspects, would be profoundly disturbed to think this might really happen, but we must allow Wesley his vivid characterization.

AFTER DEATH

The most important statement of Wesley's doctrine of the state immediately following death is the Sermon 'On Faith', dated 17th January 1791 (S. 122);

that is, six weeks before his death, the last of his published sermons. It gives added weight to these words to remember they were written by the venerable preacher so short a time before he himself entered into the great unknown beyond the grave. Holding to the doctrine of the immortality of souls, Wesley also asserts belief in an intermediate state. This he usually terms Hades, although occasionally he terms it Paradise, when he is describing the happy state of the redeemed. After this, following the Resurrection, Heaven and Hell are the permanent states of all mankind. Wesley's doctrine of the intermediate state allows no possibility of change; especially it is not regarded as conceivable that in this state man will 'change direction'. Those who have died in their sins will be actively concerned with bad angels in evil works. 'Those who are with the rich man, in the unhappy division of Hades, will remain there, howling and blaspheming, cursing and looking upwards, till they are cast into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (S. 122, 4). On the other hand, those who are now in Paradise in Abraham's bosom 'will be continually ripening for heaven, will be perpetually holier and happier, till they are received into the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world'. Paradise is thus described as 'the place of human spirits waiting to be made perfect' (ibid. 11). Those who are waiting to be made perfect are regarded as actively engaged in good works, especially in assisting 'their brethren below'. Wesley believed that this abode of departed spirits must be in some place; otherwise these spirits must be omnipresent, which he cannot allow, as this belongs only to God. But he does not conjecture where this place might be, this being unrevealed in Scripture. Paradise, the abode of those who have died in faith, is described as a state in which general affection will not conflict with particular affection—that is, there will be recognition of friends and relatives, for spirits will know each other (S. 122, 11). On the basis that we continue the life we have known here, Wesley says that knowledge and holiness which we have begun to gain here will grow in Paradise, in converse with the saints, and especially with Jesus. 'Every holy temper which we carry with us into Paradise will remain with us for ever' (ibid. 11). This emphasizes the need for growth in goodness in the present life. We shall see later how closely Wesley connected Christian perfection with the hope of future bliss. Wesley concludes his thoughts on Paradise by saying that although we only have a little knowledge, this is nevertheless far more than pagan reason can discover.

In Wesley's scheme of thought about the future, resurrection and judgement eventually follow; there will be, he believes, a general resurrection, and a final judgement, which will then finally determine the destiny of man for ever. The resurrection is described in realistic terms as the rising again of these bodies which have been laid in the grave. Wesley argues that the grave cannot give up any other body than that which has been laid in it. Yet the resurrection body will be suited to the life of the spirit. We shall take again a body without weakness or infirmity, for 'if we were to receive again all frailties, I much doubt whether a wise man, were he left to his choice, would willingly take his again: whether he would not choose to let his [body] still lie rotting in the grave rather than be chained again to such a cumbersome clod of earth' (S. 137, II.1). The description of the bliss which follows the resurrection is memorably expressed as 'a mind free from all troubles and guilt in a body free from all

pains and diseases' (ibid. II.1). To those who say this cannot be because it is inconceivable, Wesley replies that the resurrection of the body is no more unbelievable than the first creation of the body in a mother's womb. This may indeed be beyond understanding; yet it happens! And equally the resurrection will happen. The resurrected body is moreover described in some detail. Reference is made to its sprightliness and nimbleness, which qualities one can well imagine Wesley valuing highly. No longer will the spirit be clogged and fettered with our dull, sluggish, inactive bodies. Because the flesh is the chief enemy of the soul, we renounce it at our baptism. We can prepare for the life of the spiritual body by 'cleansing ourselves more and more from earthly fetters'. In this application of the Sermon 137 we are somewhat forcibly reminded that Wesley wrote this in 1732, six years before his Aldergate experience, and more significantly even than this, before he had learned in the Atlantic storm on his way home from Georgia that he was afraid to die, and therefore, he concluded, not at peace with God. The theme of this sermon is therefore fortitude, patience, self-denial—but not faith. Yet it stands in the published sermons as an indication of what Wesley believed about the resurrection, even though it does not represent Wesley's mature thought on the central importance of faith.

Along with the resurrection goes judgement, which was a vivid reality in Wesley's thought. I suppose one of the easiest things in the world is to dilate upon a judgement which one is sure will rightly fall on others, but which one will personally escape. It is undeniable that there are instances in Wesley of the idea that judgement will be welcomed by the redeemed and feared by the sinners. Charles Wesley can write:

*Sinners shall lift their guilty heads,
and shrink to see a yawning hell, (H. 56, 2)*

and there is possibly an element of smugness in the way believers will look down on a burning world:

*We, while the stars from heaven shall fall,
And mountains are on mountains hurled,
Shall stand unmoved amidst them all,
And smile to see a burning world. (H. 56, 4)*

But there is much more than this in Wesley's view of judgement. It is best expressed when applied to believers personally:

*Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Midst two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell! (S. 54, 5)*

In order that he may stand unmoved at the final judgement, a believer must practise obedience:

*Be this my one great business here,
With serious industry and fear,
Eternal bliss to insure;
Thine utmost counsel to fulfil,
And suffer all thy righteous will,
And to the end endure.* (H. 58, 5)

This same view is expressed in his plea for mercy, which is surely more in accord with Christian sentiments than the supposition that believers can be so remote from their world as merely to smile at its final destruction:

*If thy dreadful controversy,
With all flesh is now begun,
In thy wrath remember mercy,
Mercy first and last be shown:
Plead thy cause with sword and fire,
Shake us 'till the curse remove,
'Till thou com'st, the world's desire,
Conqu'ring all with sov'reign love.* (H. 59, 2)

There is also the idea that judgement is to be welcomed by believers because it brings hope for those fainting beneath the load of sin, and promise of perfection for those 'whose loins are girt' and 'whose lamps are burning bright' (H. 53, 2, 3). While therefore the threat of judgement is not avoided, it can be said that the main emphasis of Wesley is in his doctrine of judgement falls upon the positive side—that is, upon the advantage this final judgement will be to those striving against sin, and also upon the element of mercy which must surely have a foremost place in any Christian consideration of this matter.

HEAVEN AND HELL

We can pass quickly over the stereotyped descriptions of heaven which are occasionally found in Wesley's thought—milk-white robes, palms, crowns of glory, endless song, etc. (H. 73). The interesting emphases of Wesley's thought about heaven are centred on relationship—the relationship between Christ and the believer, and between the Church below and the Church above. And this is all expressed in terms which take proper account of the mystery necessarily involved in any speculation about the after-life. Life in heaven is life with Christ—this I suppose would be Wesley's chief ground for asserting belief in a future life:

*Jesus is their great reward,
Jesus is their endless rest.* (H. 50, 1)

*Followed by their works they go
Where their head hath gone before.* (H. 50, 2)

*Jesus smiles and says, 'Well done
'Good and faithful servant thou!
'Enter and receive thy crown,
'Reign with me triumphant now.'* (H. 50, 4)

This same emphasis is found in a familiar hymn we use today, 'Jesus the First and Last, On Thee my soul is cast':

*Yet when the work is done,
The work is but begun:
Partaker of thy grace,
I long to see thy face;
The first I prove below,
The last I die to know. (MHB 105, 2;—not in 1780
book)*

Along with this emphasis on the fellowship of the believer with Christ, is an equal stress on the fellowship between the Church below and the Church above. This may well be regarded as one of the distinctive contributions of the Wesleys to this doctrine. It is expressed very forcibly in many of the hymns, sometimes in memorable phrases. One we know very well is:

*One family we dwell in him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream.
The narrow stream of death. (MHB 824, 2)*

No less memorable, although less familiar, are the lines:

*From a suffering church beneath,
To a reigning church above. (H. 51, 4)*

In the sermon on 'Human Life a Dream', it is asserted that the wonders of heaven will be increased by fellowship with ministering spirits, and with human friends, with whom temptation has been shared (S. 121, 12). Death is not able to separate those who are united in Christ. Note also Hymn 48, 3 (Rejoice for a brother deceased):

*There all the ship's company meet,
Who sailed with the Saviour beneath,*

and the verse quoted in Sermon 122, 6:

*Can death's interposing tide,
Spirits one in Christ divide?*

We may infer this also from what has been noted above about the relationship between loved ones in Paradise, for Paradise is but a preparing for the future joys of heaven.

Heaven is an inexpressibly happy place, not mainly by contrast with the miseries of this life, but rather because the joys found here in Christ will be magnified above:

*Happy while on earth we breathe,
Mightier bliss ordained to know;
Trampling down sin, hell and death,
To the third heaven we go! (H. 57, 3)*

It is perhaps strange to notice that along with this happy view of heaven goes a terrifying and awe-inspiring idea of hell. Hell was a vivid reality to Wesley. He believed that if he or any man died in his sins, the only prospect before him was a literally endless punishment and torment. No thought of whether a righteous God could inflict eternal punishment provides any check to this conviction. It may be, as Wesley himself affirms, that he did not paint the horrors of hell in the same glowing detail as some. For instance, Thomas à Kempis says that misers will have the continual punishment of molten gold being poured down their throats. Wesley certainly insists that we must not go beyond scripture in describing hell. But his view of scripture is essentially literalist, so that he does seriously believe in everlasting fire, in a lake of ever-burning brimstone, and in everlasting torment. If Wesley is not as gruesome as some in his teaching about hell, he is gruesome enough for most moderns. The punishment of sinners is two-fold—punishment of loss, and punishment of feeling. The loss includes having no friends (cp. the view of heaven as a fellowship), no beauty, no light except the flames of hell. With this must be considered loss of potentially more wonderful things than can be known on earth: 'Then they will fully understand the value of what they have vilely cast away' (S. 72, I.3). The penalty of sin is everlasting destruction, but this does not mean even the eventual relief of pain in annihilation. It is a dreadful fate which knows no end, from which there is no relief, either by fainting or sleeping. This view of eternal suffering is expressed in the sermon on the Eternity of God; after millions of years, it will be no nearer its end than it was the moment it began.

The use which is made of this doctrine of hell is partly to encourage sinners to turn to God through fear of damnation, but also to set before them the vivid contrast between the bliss of heaven and the misery of hell. There is in fact not so much emphasis as one might reasonably expect upon fear of hell as a basis of belief. Considering the times in which he lived, Wesley was certainly not an extremist in this doctrine, and beneath all his expressions of doom and dismay lies the insistence on the possibility of faith, repentance and life.

Indeed it is this pointing out the way of salvation in Christ which remains the dominant feature of Wesley's eschatology. As with all his doctrines, this one serves a very urgent and practical end. It is not expounded for the sake of mere speculation, but to give urgency to the appeal for repentance and faith. The way is plain—those who do not repent will with their 'infirmities' (i.e. sins) go straight to hell (S. 40, I.7). Man in his natural state cannot appreciate the significance of eternity; but the remedy is faith, for 'faith places the unseen, the eternal world, continually before his face' (S. 54, I.17).

Part of the way is to begin now in thought to connect earth and heaven, and so to begin to wake out of the dream of life (S. 121, 10). This aspect is emphasized also in the sermon on Satan's Devices. It is necessary to realize that Satan continually tries to turn our eyes from the goal; so 'to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us' (S. 42, I.10).

But finally, the most distinctive approach of all is the connexion with Christian perfection, which was the dominating theme of all Wesley's doctrine. Final justification is the only proper end of sanctification in this present life. A favourite phrase of Wesley's was 'that holiness without which no man can see the

Lord'. The requirement for the original justification of a sinner is faith alone. But the requirement for full sanctification and final justification is faith working by love. Sanctification is part of the complete whole of God's salvation, which must end in final justification—that is, in heaven itself. This life is a necessary preparation for that ultimate end. The beginning of the process of salvation is pardon; its end is to see the Lord in glory. Thus Wesley writes: 'God hath joined from the beginning pardon, holiness and heaven' (S. 42, II.4). As usual, Charles Wesley expresses this in memorable words over and over again. From the many possible examples we choose the following, taken from a hymn no longer sung among us:

*Physician of souls unto me,
Forgiveness and holiness give;
And then from the body set free,
And then to the city receive.* (H. 70, 3)

WILLIAM STRAWSON

¹ This paper does not attempt to evaluate or restate Wesley's views; the intention is to set out those views with as little interpretation as possible.

² The abbreviations used in the references given in this paper are as follows: S=sermon; St. S.=*Standard Sermons*; H.=hymn (all hymns, except where stated otherwise, are quoted from the 1780 *Hymn Book*); W.=*Wesley's Works* (5th ed.).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY IN AMERICAN METHODISM IN THE NINE- TEENTH CENTURY

THE TOPIC assigned for this paper is restricted to Methodism in the United States and may seem to many, as it did to the writer, somewhat inappropriately provincial under the sponsorship of this Institute and only very obliquely related to our general theme. The Committee may, however, have been wiser than they knew. The theology of American Methodism in the nineteenth century, so determinatively significant for an understanding of contemporary *motifs* and of the uncalculated assertions of Methodists from the United States, has, with one exception to be noted, never at any time been brought under constructive, critical scrutiny. It may not therefore be amiss for

those from other lands to 'listen in' as this act of penance seeks to enlist others in the work of academic restitution.

In writing to James Hervey, John Wesley asserted, 'I look upon the world as my parish'. The context reveals that he was referring to the parochial ecumenism of the early Church. He regarded the wide world as a rightful field of summons and service. Every human being, potentially, might claim of him every service a parishioner needs from his pastor.

American Methodism was, from the beginning, committed to her Lord through this Wesleyan legacy. But Methodism at the turn of the nineteenth century had an actual world close at hand. (To avoid needless repetition, the term 'Methodism', unless otherwise indicated, refers to Methodism in the United States.) In 1801, eighty per cent of Continental United States was uninhabited. By 1851 this territory was occupied, and the ministry of Methodism to the summoning need of such rapid expansion, including the ministry to the Indians in their continued exile to the West, had been given through the establishment of churches contiguous with every wave of frontier development from the Appalachians to the western slopes of the Sierra Nevadas—including Texas.

This fact of a connexional structure of Societies over so vast an area in so short a time shows the effectiveness, under God, of Methodism's vocation in the first half of the nineteenth century. So rapid an expansion had not been equalled in Christendom since the Apostolic Era. Such were our Fathers, and we know ourselves unworthy of them. Perhaps we should recall the words of Goethe, in spite of his naturalistic romanticism:

*Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast;
Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.*

(What you have inherited from your fathers; Earn it, if truly you would possess it.)

While fulfilling the gigantic mission of those pregnant decades, Methodism had little time or opportunity for creative theologizing. (In certain regions of the United States this frontier mandate is still a palpable excuse for the neglect of theology.)

In addition to the complex of problems endemic to the frontier, there was the continuous element of schism tearing at the heart of Methodism. Thirteen groups separated from the Church in the nineteenth century—most of them with both moral and legal justification for their action. These do not include the grievous partition of Methodism in 1844 into the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

This study is limited to the main body of Methodism until 1844 and to developments in the two major divisions of the movement after that date. It is further limited to the primary task of studying the works of the theologians in each of the seminaries or theological schools established in the nineteenth century, with the exception of Iliff Theological Seminary in Denver, Colorado, founded in 1892, and the Maclay School of Religion in Southern California, founded in 1887—the theological publications of these two schools having had to await the claims of the twentieth century. Original sources have been used, along with the indispensable aid of an unpublished doctoral dissertation

investigating the theology of Methodism in the nineteenth century presented to Yale University in 1955 by Professor Leland H. Scott. This work is used by permission and credit is recognized by documentation.

EARLY AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

At the time of the 'Christmas Conference' (1784) the only academically trained scholar in Methodism was Thomas Coke. Two of his sermons delivered at that Conference, *The God-head of Christ* and *On the Ordination of Ministers*, were published in the U.S.A. The latter work represents ideas uniquely his own rather than those representative of either Anglicanism or the position of Wesley. Later, Coke's *Commentaries* on the Old and New Testaments were made available, but were not commended for study.

In 1789, John Dickins was placed in charge of the publication of books sponsored by the Conference. The first books issued under his editorship were European in origin—for example, à Kempis's *On the Imitation of Christ*, Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and *Saints' Rest*, J. Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism*, the Wesleyan Hymn-book and Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* (cp. N. Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, New York: Mason & Lane, 1840, II.67ff.).

Nathan Bangs (1778-1845) was a prolific writer. He is to be honoured for two significant contributions made in the nineteenth century. He was the first historian of the American Methodists and he became in 1820 the dynamic Editor of Methodism's first journal of theology—*The Methodist Magazine*—since the attempt to start an American *Arminian Magazine* had met with failure. In the first issue he wrote of Methodism:

During a number of years it appears that education of all sorts, as well as writing for the public eye, was laid aside as useless, and we seem to have come to the strange conclusion that we had naught else to do but simply to preach the Gospel . . . Hence the Magazine has been discontinued for more than twenty years and scarcely anything issued from our press except what was imported from Europe, and much of this was brought before the public eye through other *media* (Nathan Bangs, op. cit. II.318).

Wilbur Fiske (1792-1839) is important to Methodism for several reasons. He was, indeed, the first Methodist theologian to receive major recognition among the theologians of other denominations. Secondly, he served as the principal administrator of two of Methodism's earliest educational institutions—the Wesleyan Academy (Wilbraham, Massachusetts), and Wesleyan University (Middletown, Connecticut). This latter school, of which he was the founder-president has the prestige of being Methodism's first permanent college.

Fiske was the first Methodist clergyman to receive a full baccalaureate education (two years of study at the University of Vermont and two years at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, from which school he received the Bachelor of Arts degree). In passing, it may be noted that the degree was conferred by a Baptist University.

The chief contribution of Fiske is his learned exemplification of the growing concern for a more contemporary theological methodology expressed in the oft-repeated plea for an adequate philosophical approach to theology—a concern of Methodism to the present day.

Without abandoning, verbally at least, the need for biblical foundations of theology, he insists that Christian theology, in order to avoid erroneous conclusions from biblical data, especially respecting such problems as moral agency and responsibility, requires the 'analytical elements of philosophy both moral and mental'. But he modifies this view later on as he recognizes that not all philosophies are amenable to the Christian view of revelation, however interpreted. He writes:

But especially is this philosophical examination necessary whenever a superficial or an erroneous philosophy would force upon us an erroneous theology. . . . True philosophy is an analysis of constituent principles but the origins of these principles is in relation to the will of the Creator. . . . And the nature of these relations is beyond the reach of the human mind (*vide* W. Fiske, *Calvinistic Controversy*, N.Y.: Mason & Lane, 1835, pp.156ff.).

Careful study of Fiske on the drive for an adequate philosophy reveals his dependence upon the 'Common Sense' school at Princeton University, whose views were enunciated by James McCosh and later brought to elaboration by Sir William Hamilton in Scotland. In addition, and perhaps even more decisively, he was influenced by the writings of Bishop Joseph Butler, especially his *Analogy of Religion*, which was circulating among American Methodists well into the second half of the nineteenth century.

As indicated above, our chief concern is to be with the works of the first systematic theologians of the newly established theological seminaries, but the facts require the parenthetical statement that the dominant influence on Methodism *at large* was not the works of Methodist seminarians but rather the continued authority of Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes*. In the Conference Course of Study, this work imported from Britain was the 'standard' source of theological thought for the decades between 1840 and 1870, as it had been, in so far as sources apart from Wesley and Fletcher were recognized, in the preceding decade. As late as 1877 an eminent Methodist minister commented:

To no other single agency is the continued doctrinal unity of Methodism so much indebted as to the extensive use of Watson's *Institutes*. . . . This great work has been the standard Methodist systematic theology for a full half century; and, in respect to the substance of Christian doctrine, it was never more thoroughly acceptable than at the present time (Daniel Curry in his Introduction to Miner Raymond's *Systematic Theology*, Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877, p.72).

The influence of Watson in this era, however, was not without its critics. One such was the Reverend B. F. Cocker, later a professor in the University of Michigan, who had read the *Critique of Pure Reason* and other Kantian writings. In an article published in 1862 in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (the later name of the *Methodist Magazine*), Professor Cocker writes concerning Watson's *Institutes*:

He affirms with earnestness and emphasis, that we have no idea of God, of right or wrong, except as derived from *without* by instruction and verbal revelations; indeed that we have no *faculty of knowing* on any of these subjects, except faith. . . . Reason is not, with him, an intuitive but a discursive faculty. It does not apprehend *a priori*,

self-evident truth. . . . It is therefore but natural that he should enter his solemn protest against the attempt to construct a science of natural theology (*M.Q.R.*, XLIV, 1862, p.184).

The article goes on to show Watson's uncritical acceptance of John Locke's empiricism without attention to what happened to empiricism at the hands of Berkeley and Hume—and does Methodism want Hume to undergird the continuing influence of Thomas Paine?

The founding of the Methodist seminaries in the nineteenth century is an illuminating narrative in itself, but it cannot be indulged in at this juncture. Suffice it to say that no seminary was founded by action of the General Conference and each had only nominal recognition from the contiguous Annual Conferences. Each had also to make its way completely alone and not without opposition (occasionally bitter) from some of the leadership of Methodism.

We now turn to the first seminary and a determinatively significant American Methodist theologian.

WILLIAM F. WARREN, 1833-1929

(The first and only full-length scholarly appraisal of Warren's theological work is an unpublished doctoral dissertation presented at Boston University by Dr Howard Hunter of Tufts College.)

William F. Warren graduated from Wesleyan University in 1853 and spent the following year establishing a classical school in Mobile, Alabama. In 1855 he returned to New England and entered the Methodist Conference. The same year he began his studies in the Andover Theological Seminary of the Congregational Church. From Andover he matriculated in the University of Berlin and subsequently in the University of Halle, being one of the first American Methodists to study in Germany. In 1858 he returned to America, serving pastorates in New England, where he remained until 1861, during which time he published numerous sermons and articles in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*.

In 1861 Warren was appointed professor of systematic theology at the newly established Methodist seminary in Bremen, Germany. (Again in passing, we may note that the first American Methodist to take up the vocation of a systematic theologian did so in Germany.) While in Germany, Professor Warren published in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* (July 1863) a study of 'The Impending Revolution in Anglo-Saxon Theology'. In the article he envisages the necessary alteration in the methodology of theological apologetics involved in the changes in the science of physics from a mechanical to a dynamic theory. Warren also asserts that the change in theoretical physics will bring about 'the entire supplanting of natural theology in its old-fashioned sense, by a fresh, vigorous and sound philosophy of religion'. The following quotation from the article exemplifies his ingestion, at Halle, of Schleiermacher's new theological method. The change, he says, will mean, among many things,

. . . the frank and formal abandonment of all endeavours to demonstrate, logically, the existence of God on principles independent of the moral and religious nature and history of man, and the equally frank and formal substitution of a defence of religion,

based upon itself and its own phenomena, supported by collateral evidence only so far as such evidence may incidentally accrue to it in the consistent carrying through of a theistic philosophy.

Here is complete abandonment of the 'classical arguments' for the existence of God and the expression of New England Methodism's enduring involvement with the philosophy and psychology of religion.

Two years later, while still at Bremen, Professor Warren published a single volume entitled an Introduction (*Einleitung*) to a projected complete *Systematische Theologie einheitlich behandelt*. Further volumes were prevented by other duties. This theological discourse has never been translated from the German.

In his discussion of theological method Professor Warren rejects the idealistic (or intuitionist), the Lockean (or empiric), and the mystical methodologies. He espouses what he calls 'Christian Realism', by which he ascribes reality to the thinking subject as well as to the world of nature, and hence is a striking precursor of Boston University's late ontological and epistemological 'Personalism'. But man's faculty of knowledge (*die Vernunft*) is limited, he says, and needs divine illumination. This illumination is revelation. Though manifest in history, nature, and the human spirit, it is most definitively articulated in God's extraordinary verbal revelation in the Scriptures (*Wortoffenbarung*). All systematic theology, accordingly, must assent to the normative Scriptures (W. F. Warren, *Einleitung, Systematische Theologie*, Bremen, Verlag des Trachtausen, 1865, pp.86ff.)

The *Einleitung* may be cited once more on what Warren calls Methodism's definitive or 'material' principle, namely, that man depends solely on his own free will with respect to the enlightening and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Man is free. But freedom is a gift of grace; it is not of nature. Man is born under the aegis of God's objective restoration of freedom and conscience, through the universally efficacious atonement in Christ Jesus. This is reminiscent of the precise words of John Wesley, who wrote:

Both Mr Fletcher and Mr Wesley absolutely deny natural free-will. We both steadily assert that the will of man is by *nature* free only to evil. Yet we both believe that every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace (*Wesley's Works*, 3rd Edition, X.392)

and who stated in another context:

There is no man . . . that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural; It is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure . . . of that light . . . which, sooner or later, . . . lightens every man that cometh into the world (J. Wesley, *Works*, Sermon LXXXV, VI.512).

Accordingly, with all his concern for *natural* theology and the philosophy of religion, Professor Warren returns to an essentially Wesleyan statement of theological anthropology. It is put with precise clarification in an article (1891) published simultaneously in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* and the *Methodist Quarterly Review, South*. Methodism's 'impartial evangelical, irrepressibly

optimistic' spirit is based on the conviction that universal efficacious grace restores human personality to native dignity and human perfection to gracious possibility (*vide M.Q.R.*, 'Methodist and Pre-Methodist Principles of Education', *M.Q.R.S.*, XXVIII, 1891, p.381).

In 1866, one year after the publication of the *Einleitung*, Warren became Professor in the Methodist General Theological Institute, founded by John Dempster in 1847, which was then moving from Concord, New Hampshire, to Boston, Massachusetts. He became the first Dean of the Boston School of Theology (1867-73) and later the first President of the University, chartered in 1869. His theological work from this date on is limited to occasional articles in journals of theology and published sermons.

The Garrett Biblical Institute on the Campus of Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, was in 1855 also founded by John Dempster, whose illustrious achievements cannot here be recounted. The first Professor of systematic theology at Garrett was Miner Raymond.

MINER RAYMOND, 1811-97

Raymond graduated from the Methodist Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, in 1833, at which time he joined the faculty. He taught rhetoric and composition until 1838, when he transferred to the chair of mathematics. The same year he was admitted to the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, leaving Wilbraham to serve pastorates in the environs of Boston. In 1848 (ten years after leaving) he returned to Wilbraham Academy as Principal and remained there for sixteen years. In 1864 he was elected to the chair of Systematic Theology at Garrett Biblical Institute. Unlike William Warren, Raymond was without formal collegiate study. He remained at Garrett for thirty-two years, retiring in 1895.

Raymond's text-book is the first in the Methodist Church of the United States to bear the title *Systematic Theology* (M. Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877-9). For the purposes of this discussion attention will be called only to four of its divisions—Apologetics, Anthropology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology—for these have most direct relevance to the Wesleyan heritage.

In apologetics Raymond's views are patently ambivalent. He places primal importance on so-called objective evidences, namely miracles and fulfilled prophecy. To these are added ponderous quotations from Joseph Butler and Paley, especially the latter's *Evidences of Christianity* (1794). But this, he says, does not suffice; final appeal must be made to private religious experience:

The Bible commends itself acceptable as credible because of what it is in itself. . . . It sustains its claim to inspiration by the indubitable proofs of miracles and prophecies. The commendations and claims are . . . corroborated by all testimonies bearing upon the case from whatsoever source these testimonies come, and are demonstrated in the personal experience of all who submit to its claim (M. Raymond, op. cit. I.224).

Incongruously, in the light of his methodology, Raymond affirms that the idea of God is a natural intuition:

When . . . it is said . . . that the idea of God is an intuition or idea of the reason, the most intelligent interpretation of such language is that it is intended to affirm that this

idea, on the occurrence of the appropriate occasion, arises in the mind . . . (M. Raymond, op. cit. III.12).

This statement would seem to indicate acquaintance with the writings of Kant, but Raymond did *not* read Kant; he took this interpretation from a volume by M. Hopkins, *Outline Study of Man*.

In the field of theological anthropology Raymond accounts for the origin of man in strictly literalistic Biblical terms:

The Bible stands or falls with the theory that the Adam and Eve of Genesis were the first and only created members of the human family—that the race has existed only about six or eight thousand years and that all men and women . . . are descendants of that one sole pair.

The first review of Raymond's work in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* written by Daniel Whedon objects strenuously:

We can hardly think that Dr Raymond has fully analyzed the subject. . . . The Bible will no more fall by the adoption of evolution than it fell by the adoption of the antipodes. . . . We do not believe in the evolutionary creation of man. We shall believe in it when it is proved. And we shall then read certain texts and explain certain doctrines by the light of that discovery (D. Whedon, *M.Q.R.*, LIX, 1877, p.736).

In his discussion of man's moral condition and original sin, Raymond appears to have abandoned completely the Wesleyan view of a free agency restored by God's grace through the efficacious, universal atonement in Christ. Instead he recognized the traditional forms for asserting human depravity. Original sin is 'the most marked and the most deplorable' consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve. But this original sin does *not* affect, crucially, the freedom of the will, for man is never totally depraved (M. Raymond, op. cit. II.59, III.63ff.). Yet, illogically, he asserts, as a somewhat parenthetical comment, the Wesleyan view of a graciously restored moral ability (Raymond, op. cit. II.348).

With respect to the theory of the atonement, there are again two kinds of emphases in Raymond's theology. Asserted first is the traditional Anselmic view of an expiatory substitutionary atonement (M. Raymond, op. cit. II.308ff.) But to this view is added the rudiments of the Grotian governmental theory, with no reference, however, to Grotius. God's essential glory is conserved by the vindication of His rectoral righteousness. 'Through the sustentation of the ends of the divine government, Christ's death makes possible the non-execution of penalty without any compromise of law . . . and without any sacrifice of the ends for which government is established and maintained' (M. Raymond, op. cit. II.304).

Raymond's study of ecclesiology refers to the problems of Church polity and ministerial orders. He notes, somewhat incredulously, that the New Testament gives no guidance respecting orders of the ministry. There may be just as many *orders* as the Church understands to be necessary for its efficient functioning. But the Methodist Church, he holds, is 'a true and valid *episcopal* church', its bishops are set apart by 'three distinct elections and ordinations'. If we Methodists insist on using the term *order* 'and may say we have two orders in our ministry, we must, for a stronger reason, say we have three orders; for the

episcopacy is differentiated from the eldership by an incomparably greater difference than the eldership is from the diaconate' (quoted in L. H. Scott, *Methodist Theology in the Nineteenth Century in America*, p.659, an unpublished manuscript). Professor Raymond, however, writes here in direct contradiction of the constitution of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which clearly stated that Bishops are *not* of a different or higher 'order' than elders.

'For over a decade, Raymond's remained the only *complete* system of theology indigenous to American Methodism' (L. H. Scott, op. cit. p.316). Yet its influence apart from students in Garrett remained almost negligible. The reason is that the three-volume Systematic Theology of William Burt Pope, of Didsbury College, then of Manchester, England, was selected by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1880, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1882, to replace the *Institutes* of Richard Watson in the Conference Course of Study. *Thus from the beginning until 1890 American Methodism was continuously tutored by English Methodist theologians.*

The discussion now turns to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Without question the writings and lectures of Thomas O. Summers were the most pervasive influences in Southern Methodism in the nineteenth century.

THOMAS O. SUMMERS, 1812-82

Thomas O. Summers was born in Dorsetshire, England, and was reared in the Congregational Church. In time he rebelled against the extreme doctrine of the divine decrees and divine reprobation taught in his home-town chapel. This rebellion led to an adolescent agnosticism from which he was retrieved by the thorough reading, at the age of fifteen years, of the complete edition of Adam Clarke's *Commentaries*. He wrote: 'When I emerged from skepticism, engendered by Calvinism, I naturally joined the Methodists. I studied their confession, Hymnal, and Discipline, and was pleased with all three' (*M.Q.R.S.*, XIX, 1882, p.173).

At eighteen years of age, he came to America, and his career called him eventually to direct the thought of Southern Methodism's first theological school—as the first Dean of the School of Theology, and Professor of Systematic Theology in the newly established Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee (1870).

Summers entered the Methodist ministry through admission to the Baltimore Conference in 1835. He served rigorous circuits in Maryland, Virginia, and Texas. During this time, without academic training of any kind, he continued an intensive programme of biblical and theological studies. He became a well-educated man in the same sense that Abraham Lincoln was well educated.

Transferring from Texas to Alabama in 1844, he stood firmly with the Southern (or, as it was officially designated, the *Constitutional*) cause in the General Conference which occasioned the tragic division of American Methodism. In the organizing Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, convened in Louisville, Kentucky (1846), he served as secretary, and was asked to serve as chairman of the committee to compile a new hymnal and to become assistant editor of the *Southern Methodist Christian Advocate*. In 1850 he became Book Editor and in 1858 the Editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review, South*. In 1875 he accepted the call to Vanderbilt, where he remained until 1882, the year of his death.

Summers's writings are numerous. Some mention should be made, however, of his *Commentaries on the New Testament* (1870), which had diffusive influence in Southern Methodism, before turning to his Systematic Theology.

In his *Commentaries* his concern, as adumbrated in the introduction, was two-fold—(1) the adherence to a correct text verified by the most authentic manuscripts, and (2) the simple exposition of the passages, avoiding either long secondary citations, or extended 'practical reflections'.

Summers's lectures at Vanderbilt on the Twenty-five Articles of Religion were edited and published in two volumes by his former student, who was at that time Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt, the Reverend John J. Tigert, six years after Summers's death, with the title, *Systematic Theology: A Complete Body of Wesley Arminian Divinity* (Nashville, Tennessee, Publishing House of M.E. Church, South, 1888). This work, because of the nature of the lectures, lacks logical systematization. There is considerable originality in the text, but a critic, Charles Bledsoe, was no doubt correct in observing that 'Summers measures all things in heaven and earth by Richard Watson's *Institutes*' (vide E. Mims, *History of Vanderbilt University*; Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1946, p.60).

To illustrate some facets of Summers's theology, we arbitrarily select four sections of his systematics: methodology, soteriology, anthropology, and Methodist ecumenism—since this is the order of discussion Summers follows.

In methodology the basic question always is: 'Where does one go for the data of theologizing?' Summers recognizes both 'natural' and 'revealed' theology as sources in accordance with the nineteenth-century articulation of the divisions. His ultimate affirmation, however, is that the Christian faith 'is *not* a system of natural, but of revealed theology'. Yet he is not willing to abandon natural theology. He recognizes 'certain primordial intuitions' of the existence of God. He says: 'the mind is so constituted that in the exercise of its native powers, under favorable auspices—including the operation of the Holy Spirit . . . it can arrive at the knowledge of God' (T. O. Summers, *Systematic Theology*, I.50). But in the last analysis he binds himself to say that 'though we admit such intuitional principles in order to be capable of recognizing Deity', revelation in the Scriptures remains the conclusive source of man's knowledge of God—as well as the prime source for the awareness of moral obligation. Here Summers returns to Richard Watson, with some relief, and also to Bishop Pearson (a seventeenth-century English theologian), both of whom he quotes to assert mankind's ultimate dependence on external instruction from the Scriptures for any real idea of God (Summers, op. cit. I.48ff.).

Furthermore, Summers is fascinated by the development of the Darwinian theory of evolution and the awakened interest in geology. This interest leads him to a denial of a literal exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis. He writes:

The opening chapters of Genesis are to be discerned from the demiurgic account which follows, and hence the creation of the earth may date back as many millions of ages as geology requires for all the phenomena developed by its researches.

It may also be noted that Summers had the temerity to invite Thomas Huxley to lecture in Vanderbilt, and Vanderbilt is in Tennessee, a state not without some notoriety on matters Darwinian. This led to the dismissal of Alexander

Winchell, Professor of Geology, but Summers seems to have escaped any radical criticism.

With respect to the doctrine of the Atonement, Summers attempts, quite understandably, if wholly unsuccessfully, to assert three theories simultaneously. Though influenced by W. B. Pope of Didsbury, he lacks the exact discriminations made by the latter. He writes: 'Christ's mediation is grounded in the Divine concern for the salvation of mankind, as bearing a three-fold relevancy, i.e. to God's own perfections (propitiatory-Anselmic), to the interests of the universe (the governmental-Grotian), and to the future fealty of the transgressors (moral-Abelardian)' (Summers, op. cit., I.281). The discussion ends, however, with the jettisoning of the views of Grotius and Abelard and the full reassertion of the substitutionary doctrine of Anselm. Why? The apparent answer is a desire to recapitulate the views of Wesley and Watson.

In the field of anthropology there is reassertion of the Wesley-Fletcher analyses, though with some hesitation, and with the disturbing and completely untenable habit of American Methodists of identifying those anthropological analyses with Dutch Arminianism. Summers maintains the 'utter impotence of the natural man apart from Divine grace' and at the same time affirms 'a redemption in Christ co-existent with the loss in Adam' (Summers, op. cit., II.25ff.). Because of the divine forgiveness of the guilt (*reatus*) of original sin by the efficacy of Christ's universal atonement, the guilt of depravity is not charged upon posterity until confirmed by actual transgression. Summers states it thus:

That preventing grace which is given to *every* man (through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus) so far modifies and counteracts the depravity of our nature that various virtues are developed in every stage of man's life—which, however imperfect, give a charm to individuals and society. . . . The unconverted man who prides himself on his natural goodness is under responsibility for that very preventing grace which has occasioned everything that is good about him. Unless he truly acknowledges his dependence upon the atoning Lamb . . . he will be damned forever in spite of his morality (*vide* L. H. Scott, op. cit. p.394).

This simply reiterates Wesley's laconic statement: 'We ascribe all good to the free grace of God' (Wesley, *Works*, X.229).

Summers distinguishes, as did Augustine, preventing and co-operating grace. Preventing grace gives man 'the capacity to will and to do the right, enlightening the intellect', and co-operating grace 'works in us, of course, but it cannot work in us, *after the initial operation*, without working with us'.

Of special note for this Conference is Summers's recognition of the relationship between British and American Methodism and his own great dependence upon the theological work of British Methodists. He was the moving spirit in Southern Methodism to support the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference held in London in 1881, though he did not attend, and the Methodism of the South has continued to this date to take primary leadership in Methodist ecumenism. Summers desired some common agreement from the Conference on theological affirmations, but would be content, he wrote, 'if an Ecumenical catechism and Hymn Book could be adopted'. The *New York Times* criticized, editorially, the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference for avoiding the discussion of doctrine. Summers replied in an article which the *Times* published. A few sentences of that article are illuminating:

We are not confined in John Wesley's straight-jacket . . . we believe no dogma merely because Wesley affirmed it . . . we reject many of his views (quoted in L. H. Scott, *op. cit.* p.400).

Summers recognized the need for theological adaptation. 'Creeds', he wrote, 'are not like water in a cistern which purifies itself by the lapse of time.' The doctrines of Scriptural inspiration, of atonement—all crucial affirmations of Christianity—must be restated in terms 'free from all errors and incrustations of the past'. But these assertions uttered a few months before the end of the career of the Vanderbilt theologian are notably *not* characteristic of his writings.

The *Systematic Theology* by Summers was placed in the Conference Course of Study of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1892. For twenty years this work was a primary influence in the theological formulations of Southern Methodism.

Drew Theological Seminary of Madison, New Jersey, was opened in 1867 under the presidency of John McClintock. Dr Randolph S. Foster was appointed Professor of systematic theology but was elected to the Episcopacy seven years later. He was succeeded by John Miley, whose *Systematic Theology* in two volumes brought to a significant, scholarly pre-eminence the characteristic indigenous development of Methodist theology in the nineteenth century.

An historical survey, however, requires the prior recognition of two unique contributions to Methodist Theology in the United States directly connected with Drew Theological Seminary.

Methodism required organized historical resources. The first publication in the field of biblical and historical theology was the compendious *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* in five volumes, first envisaged by John McClintock (later the first President of Drew). The first volume was published in 1867 and the final one in 1887. It laid tribute upon the ablest scholarship in America. Besides the Methodist contributors from both North and South, articles were written by Leonard Bacon (Yale), J. H. Fairchild (Oberlin), G. P. Fisher (Yale), Charles Hodge (Princeton), E. A. Park (Andover), and Philip Schaff (Union).

John Fletcher Hurst (1834-1903) was uniquely responsible for enlarging the intellectual horizon of Methodism. He had been a student at the Universities of Halle and Heidelberg before becoming Professor in and subsequently the President of Drew, and later Bishop. Viewing the poverty of Methodism's ecclesiastical historiography, he was inspired by his German professor Karl Hagenbach to provide data for advanced studies in theology. Accordingly, along with George Crooks, he set up the *prospectus* (1874) for a *Biblical and Theological Library* of nine volumes to be written by American Methodist scholars. Besides Hurst's monumental two volume *History of the Christian Church* of 1897 (the first in Methodism), mention also may be made of the contribution of Milton W. Terry of Garrett Biblical Institute in his volume *Biblical Hermeneutics* and of that of Charles W. Bennett, also of Garrett, in his book *Christian Archaeology*. John Miley's work was included in this library, and to the study of Miley we now turn.

JOHN MILEY, 1813-95

Born in Ohio, John Miley received the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Augusta College in Kentucky. R. S. Foster, his predecessor at Drew, was a fellow-student. Miley served in Ohio pastorates until 1852, then transferred to the New York East Conference, where his repute in preaching and in theological writing for the twenty-year interim before going to Drew brought wide and discerning comment in Methodism of both North and South.

The discussion here must be limited. Attention will be called only to his volumes on *Systematic Theology* and to his discussion therein of theological methodology and anthropology, and the articulation of his theory of the atonement.

What are the sources of theology? Miley answers: 'There are two sources, nature and revelation' (Miley, op. cit. I.8. Cincinnati, Ohio: Methodist Book Concern, 1888). And here he brings to a climactic fulfilment the trend noted first in the writings of Wilbur Fiske—namely, American Methodism's nineteenth-century quest for an adequate and indigenously distinctive natural theology, for Miley continues: 'the first question of all religion, the existence of God, must be taken *first* to nature'. Nature is an indispensable source of theology. Our author continues then to elaborate the four classic arguments for the existence of God—ontological, cosmological, teleological, and (in Miley's terminology) anthropological. Significantly, this last argument is taken directly from Immanuel Kant's *Metaphysics of Ethics* (op. cit. I.108).

Revelation on the other hand is primarily identified with the objective utterances of the Scriptures. But revelation is by no means to be limited to the Scriptures—'revelation has no *necessary* Biblical limitation'.

In all generations sincere and devout souls have been seeking for God and truth . . . Who shall say that no such prayer has been unanswered? . . . Any religious truth divinely given . . . to the recipient from God *is* revelation (op. cit. I.11).

The determinative words here are 'religious truth divinely given', for Miley is obviously convinced of the objective revelation of valid propositions or meanings amenable to logical articulation. In this same chapter he forcefully rejects the idea that mysticism contributes any sufficient data for theology, and also vehemently sets aside Schleiermacher's elaboration of the data evoked in the religious consciousness.

There are, for Miley, two other '*mistaken sources*' of theological data—creeds or confessions, and tradition. These 'have no authoritative quality' whatsoever (op. cit. I.12). Thus, Miley easily asseverates a position long developing in American Methodism, that the classic creeds and confessions of Christendom are totally irrelevant to the construction of systematic theology. Mistakenly and dishearteningly he identified 'tradition' (*paradosis*) wholly with Roman Catholicism and the Council of Trent.

Miley attempts to construct a doctrine of original sin by admitting the framework of Western Christendom's Augustinian heritage, but at the same time invalidating the definitive constructs which particularize this heritage—thus avoiding what he calls the discriminations which have forced Arminius, Wesley, Fletcher, Pope, and Summers into 'confusion and contradiction' (op. cit. II.517ff.). The Augustinian tradition is historically characterized, in this regard,

by the assertion that the justification of man requires salvific forgiveness of two kinds of guilt—that involved in rebellious, freely willed, actual disobedience, and that attached to participation in Adamic original sin. Miley will accept the fact of an inherited, atrophied nature, but denies that this nature is in any way involved in guilt (op. cit. I.521). Hence there is no need for an efficacious, salvific, prevenient grace. In the inherited vitiated nature of man, the will is unimpairedly free to will the good (op. cit. II.272ff.). But the vitiated nature is completely incapable of initiating good motives or choices for the unimpaired will to elect. These may arise only from prevenient grace. Accordingly, Miley seeks to avoid Pelagianism by making prevenient grace morally necessary but soteriologically innocuous (op. cit. II.304ff.).

This moralistic revisionism of the doctrine of salvation and the analysis of the human predicament is far too shallow and psychologically inadequate—if not contradictory—to retain a place as a creative contribution to theology.

The anthropological asseverations of Miley lead, logically, to the necessity of revising the Methodist emphases in the doctrine of the atonement toward a morally rationalistic construct. This he does by accepting, essentially, the moral government theory of Hugo Grotius, though not without some uncriticized, implied contradiction, for the Grotian view presupposes the guilt or demerit involved in human depravity which Miley has set aside. Nevertheless, for Miley, the meaning of the Incarnation and the saving work of Christ has to do primarily with enhancing the good motives amenable to unimpaired human free will, and thus actualizing divine moral government essentially through man's rationalistic choice of the good (op. cit. II.176ff.).

The development of theology in the work of John Miley marks the end of a movement. The creatively new approach and desperately required intellectual reformation of American Methodist theological *motifs* were already under way when Miley wrote his *Systematic Theology*. But there are only three inconsequential references to this reformulation in his two volumes. I refer, of course, to the influential work of Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910), Professor of Philosophy in Boston University, who brought to America the insights of Renouvier, Lotze, and Euchen. To discerningly critical minds Bowne was without question an intellectual genius without peer in American Methodism to that date (cp. H. W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1946, p.249). Though he wrote extensively in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, candour requires the recognition that his influence on the *mass* of Methodist theologizing was neither discovered nor appropriated until the twentieth century. Hence the assigned limitations of this paper prevent us from embarking on a discussion of his work.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

First, it will have been noted that the problem of methodology and apologetics is central to each representative Methodist theologian in the period under study. This may be accounted for in the usual ways. The works of Paley and Butler and others continued to interest inquisitive minds in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century issues of natural theology. Furthermore, alert minds such as those of Fiske and Warren were quite aware of contemporary hypotheses in the physical sciences and were equally aware that the work of Paley and Butler

remained wholly irrelevant to the new issues. New constructions were required in a statement of natural theology.

The new constructions were significantly conditioned by the fact that some theologians were studying in Germany and others were reading German theology. Thus the 'Copernican Revolution' in epistemology wrought by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* laid the groundwork for the reconciliation of science and religion in Methodist theology in America as elsewhere. The work of Schleiermacher also stimulated new approaches, many of them quite false and inadequate, to the understanding of the place of 'feeling' in the cognitions of theology.

But account for the facts as one will, surely a crucial dimension in Methodist apologetics was *not* the communication of the gospel to a pagan or godless culture, or even to a culture dominated by the new science. Rather it was the communication of the gospel to those *within* the Church, who in this struggle with nature kept asking for a theology of nature which would account for the ravages nature worked upon them in their struggle with life on the frontier. Could the God of this ravaging nature be the God of their history as they sought to realize God's will in the history of a new world as learned from their saving faith in Jesus Christ? The significance of the life-work of Borden Parker Bowne is that he combined, transitionally, the philosophical concern about science and the evangelical concern about the problem of evil in Nature (given by God) which required conquering if the Kingdom of Christ were to be actualized in America.

Secondly, the concern for human responsibility in the context of the basic Protestant affirmations respecting 'salvation by faith alone' etc. became in practice confused with the necessary struggle of the 'will to live' amidst the ravages of nature on the frontier. The settlers of the expanding frontier did not conquer the wilderness, the mountains and the deserts by faith alone; yet, in retrospect, as one in imagination follows the Overland Route, the Santa Fé, and the Oregon Trails as traversed by teams of oxen and hand carts, one knows that truly it *was* by faith alone.

But this will to live, enhanced predominantly by saving faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ (witness the Gospel songs of the frontier) was assuredly perverted into a false sense of human ability which is to be found in the brash Americanisms of the present day. At the heart of the nineteenth century, however, the brashness was more indicative of creativity. Our fathers had stood by the barren banks of arid rivers, had gazed into mountain-crested bowls of sand and sage-brush, had laid their gear across the trampled turf of buffalo trails, and had cried into the teeth of inimical nature: 'We shall build a city here'; and cities arose—sometimes senseless cities, still growing apace, and still seeking a *raison d'être* for their existence beyond the mere fact of their fathers' defiance. How many towns yet abuilding raise their edifices ever higher toward the sky in symbol of the pioneer's 'Yes' to Almighty God's apparent 'No!' Such a people—and of such is the dominant strain of American Methodism—will hardly be cognizant of the relativity of an eighteenth-century solution of the problem of faith and works—and may perhaps be forgiven for living in a realm where faith is known *only* through the works of faith.

On the intellectual level, however, one may discern certain formal causes for

the *temporarily* characteristic American theological mood of self-reliance which appears so patently to be in rebellion against the sovereignty of God, and which, in most cases, unquestionably is. The heritage of Methodism is unequivocally involved in the Puritan ethic of New England (in spite of the fact that American Methodism has been, from the beginning, predominantly a movement of the South and Mid-West). The Puritans wanted to build the 'Kingdom of Christ' in this new world—witness the discerning lectures of Mr H. Richard Niebuhr at the Harvard University Tercentenary published under the title *The Kingdom of God in America*, or the numerous books and essays of Mr Perry Miller, who adroitly suggests that the early Puritan divines really hoped to make out of New England an ecclesio-political 'boot-camp' wherein to receive training for the ultimate task of directing the establishment of the Kingdom of God in England (cp. *Errand into the Wilderness*, Harvard University Press, 1956). This desire to plant the Kingdom of Christ—even through the inevitable vicissitudes of Protestant pluralism—remained part of the Methodist dynamic through most of the nineteenth century, and in many irrelevant ways still asserts itself in American life.

In this context the theological schools of Methodism meet the responsibilities flooding in through the tasks of the twentieth century. Of interest to many may be the fact that no Methodist theological faculty in America today is staffed by Methodists alone. Every faculty is characterized by confessional pluralism. Furthermore, the work of the school is enjoined in the struggle for words, concepts and ideas which express the faith. Every precaution must be taken to make sure that the Gospel is not perverted by the false understandings others may have of our Christian words and concepts. The definitions which we have used in our propaganda now need responsible linguistic analysis; otherwise our apologetic may be misunderstood.

Methodism in the United States has now many new frontiers. May we face them in the spirit of the pioneers.

DAVID C. SHIPLEY

THE FUTURE OF THE METHODIST TRADITION

THE STORY of Saul and the Witch of Endor is a reminder of the danger involved when we turn to the past in order to interpret the future. But the historian can do no other, even though to mingle history with prophecy is the hall-mark of the second-rate historian and the false prophet. It was the great Catholic taunt of the sixteenth century to cry to the Protestants, 'Where was your Church before Luther?' And we might begin with the question, 'Where was our Church before Wesley?' since there is some evidence for the impression that for 80 per cent. of British Methodists Church history begins in 1738 (and for the remaining 20 per cent. in 1810). There were two answers given to the

sixteenth-century question—what we might call the oak tree and the mistletoe views of the Church. Martin Luther and John Jewell and Richard Hooker said that the Church did not begin with them, and pointed instead to the one People of God which began with Abraham, or perhaps with Adam. The radical reformers turned away from the oak tree of a Church with a continuous pedigree to the mistletoe of a truly believing People which consisted of isolated pockets of spiritual religion—in an idealized Primitive Church before the fall of Christianity in the second century or in the time of Constantine, in such medieval sects as could be plausibly reckoned as Reformers before the Reformation, and in themselves, the Anabaptists or the Puritans or the Methodist societies. They pointed to a community within history whose real existence lay beyond it. And of course we need both concepts. We must not cut the knot which joins Israel after the flesh with the New Israel after the spirit, but we must give another answer to those who ask, 'Where was your Church before Luther, before Wesley', by saying: 'where it has always been, in the Heavenlies in Christ Jesus.' And so we must join together both truths as they are joined in the magnificent preamble to St Augustine's *City of God*—'that glorious and celestial city of God's faithful people which is seated partly in the course of these declining times, but chiefly in that solid estate of eternity.'

By the Methodist tradition we do not mean a static, rigid, fossilized worship of the past but a living partnership between the generations, ever changing, ever renewed by the pressures of human history and the creative power of the Holy Spirit, a communion of saints which is at once a fellowship between believers and a sharing in holy things. Within the unity of the Christian tradition there is a Methodist tradition. Something came into being in the middle of the eighteenth century with the rise of the Methodist Preachers and the emergence of the People called Methodists. There began then a recognizable, distinct flow of corporate life which has grown into a world-wide community of many millions. If we look for a moment at some of the 'notes' of that tradition, it is not for sectarian ends but that we may consider what we have to contribute to the Church of the future, what, with a little perhaps of Ecumenical 'enthusiasm', we might call the 'coming great Church'.

What is distinctive about us is not our Faith, for that we share with the whole catholic Church, but our history. The way that God has led us and what He has said and done among us—that really is our very own. Here in the history of Methodism, and rather specially at the point of our origin, the one Church has been pegged down at a certain point and level, as it was pegged down with the Benedictines in the sixth and the Franciscans in the thirteenth and the Lutherans in the sixteenth centuries. Here is a distinctive historical pattern of theology—yes, but theology not disembodied as a floating system of ideas, but imbedded in a historical pattern of infinite complexity, including a pattern of liturgy and confession and proclamation, and not least in companies of real men and women. One of the difficulties I have, for example, about a direct confrontation or comparison of Luther and Wesley is that it ignores the vast differences of pattern, the extent to which what Wesley has to say about justification by faith is related to eighteenth-century questions and the problems raised with immense intricacy by the Puritan and Anglican divines of the seventeenth century. Our history is the distinctive thing, and our doctrines are to be seen within that context.

One of the striking things about the emergence of Methodism is what, to use the language of another profession, we might call its 'painless extraction' from within the Church of England. Call it separation, call it schism, there has never been a break as thoroughgoing and yet as undamaging on either side in the history of the Church. It is not easy to say when this break became inevitable. One can obviously point to 1784 when John Wesley ordained preachers for North America and set apart Thomas Coke. And there was point in Charles Wesley's famous quotation from Lord Mansfield: 'Ordination means separation.' But John Wesley did not think so. Moreover, his ordinations for Scotland and England had hardly any effect on the over-all situation. The really important events had happened long before. More important than 1784 is 1739, when the London churches closed their doors on John Wesley, and when, following Whitfield, he did in Bristol what he had already done in Georgia and preached in the open air. The real manifesto is indeed the phrase in the letter to Hervey that the world was his parish, when he set out on his tremendous itinerancy like a human sputnik, a Don Quixote for Christ's sake. The troubles of these years, the antagonism of magistrates, of the mobs, of the local clergy, arose because for such men the parish was their world, and at that time each new parish boundary required another Act of Parliament and the Church machine, rigid and inflexible was unable to undertake either the evangelism or the pastoral care of the unchurched multitudes. Through John Wesley and his little band of helpers there came into existence companies of men and women living by rule, singing their hymns and praying together with a simple fervour the like of which England had perhaps not seen since the first coming of the friars. They were at first wholly encompassed by the Church of England. They still went to the parish church for baptisms, weddings, funerals, Holy Communion and, when Bishops did their duty, confirmation. And yet in an amazingly short time they had their own framework of edification, intended not to supersede but to supplement the ordinances of the Church of England, their fasts, vigils, watch-nights, love feasts, and their band, class and society meetings. These were not the result of some prefabricated, doctrinaire scheme. The Methodists did not, like the Puritans, claim to find the whole pattern of Church existence laid down by divine law in Holy Scripture. They were of all the Churches of the English Protestant tradition the least doctrinaire. Many of their usages had been invented or adapted by John Wesley in Georgia. What Wesley said of his field preaching was true about most of the apparatus of Methodism: 'What I did was no matter of . . . premeditation. There was no scheme at all previously formed . . . it was a sudden expedient.' As one of the Preachers was to put it in the Conference of 1836, 'Methodism came down out of heaven, as it was wanted, piece by piece'—a little exuberant, but a recognition of the truth that almost all the characteristic institutions of original Methodism were inspired improvisations, and because of this became, it may be, the most flexible instrument of large-scale evangelism in Christian history.

Thus to all the Church of England the 'mother Church' meant something deeper than the common use of the metaphor. In fact Methodism grew within the greater Church as a child within its mother, drawing nourishment, growing from embryo in brain and nerve and tissue until in due time it merged as a separate life. To understand how remarkable this was, remember what a life

and death struggle had followed the attempt of sixteenth-century Puritanism to grow within the Church of England. Then there had been a life and death struggle ending in the violent repudiation of Puritanism. Now Wesley did what the Puritans had failed to do and neither the government nor the bishops interfered. Individual bishops might (and did) attack the Wesleys, they might give pastoral addresses to their clergy on the errors of 'enthusiasm', but Charles Wesley could write to his brother in 1785 about the bishops: 'They have left us alone and left us to act just as we pleased, these fifty years. At present some of them are quite friendly towards us, particularly towards you.' Moreover the very temper of Methodism was different from that of the religion of the day. Here again, many of the things which Methodists did and said seemed like echoes of that Puritanism which the Church of England had rejected and which had bred in it a distaste for 'enthusiasm'. The Puritans had used itinerant preachers, lay preachers, field preaching; in their smaller conventicles they exercised a stricter Christian discipline than that of formal Christianity. They had been exponents, in a vast and impressive literature of spiritual and moral and dogmatic theology, of doctrines of 'inward religion', of a personal walk with God, of conversion, assurance, perfection. John Wesley himself owed more than he ever knew to this Puritan tradition of his own ancestors; the very language of his theology and many of his categories are conditioned by seventeenth-century Puritan controversies. In that wonderful collection of fifty odd volumes of divinity, the *Christian Library*, the Puritans are the largest company, even though Puritanism was a largely Calvinist tradition. The fact which differentiated the Church of England from the Churches of the Reformation was not the appeal to history but to reason, and John Wesley was himself always a very thorough Church of England man; even when nearest to Luther or Calvin or Richard Baxter, he never lets go of Hooker, and always couples reason with tradition, subject to the grand scriptural norm.

The full exploration of Wesley's debt to the Christian Platonists and of the Holy Club to the Non-Jurors is one of the last clues to Methodist origins which have yet to be worked out. Moreover his contacts with the Germans enabled him to bring to a tired English piety a genuine and refreshing blood transfusion by bringing together three things: the Pietist concentration on the Bible (his use of Bengel is a symbol here) and on practical philanthropy, Lutheran devotion in the great German hymns, and the Moravian stress on Christian experience, on simplicity of life and behaviour and on the reality of saving faith.

One result of this is that the mood and temper of Methodism, as of Wesley's Arminianism, were different from that of Puritan or Evangelical Calvinism. A Catholic writer, M. Rondet, has spoken of what he calls a 'pessimism of grace', a one-sided seventeenth-century Augustinianism which had emphasized so much the sinfulness of sin as to make the Fall rather than the Cross and Resurrection the real pivot of history, and which believed that only a few could be saved, a handful plucked from the vast mass of doomed humanity—a doctrine which could dry up the nerve of missionary effort. But now, in the mighty works of the revival there came a new 'Optimism of Grace'—worlds apart from eighteenth-century philosophic optimism, but a joyful and triumphant affirmation of the power of the divine love, mighty to the overthrow of strongholds and reaching out to embrace all mankind:

*For all my Lord was crucified,
For all, for all my Saviour died.*

And so Methodism spilled across from England into new worlds, into America and the West Indies and Africa, India and the islands of the south seas. And about its piety, too, there was nothing dour or morose or gloomy. At the end of the Victorian Age Dr Scott Lidgett spoke of the 'generosity and geniality of temper which has from the beginning characterized Methodism at its best'. 'Happiness' is a great key word in the first Methodist hymn-book, which began with a section entitled 'Of the Pleasantness and excellence of religion'.

The pattern of Methodist belief and edification was grounded in the famous four-fold definition of 'Our Doctrines', 'Our Discipline', 'Our Literature', 'Our Hymns'—yes, and they also spoke of 'Our liturgy', the Book of Common Prayer. For their standards, the Methodists have preached sermons; their theology was believed and preached and sung. What then, of 'Our Doctrines'—believed, preached, sung? John Wesley himself was at pains to show that the stresses of Methodism were not simply a few 'favourite ideas' of himself and his friends. He found support for them in the Bible, in the classic confessions of the Church of England, her Homilies and Prayer Book, and in her learned divines, as well as in the fathers and in the early Church.

There was first, Justification by Faith alone, that 'sola fide' which article XI declared to be wholesome and full of comfort, but which became comfortable for Wesley only when through Peter Böhler he had come to understand the experimental character of saving faith, and the need for a man to loose all hold on his own righteousness that he might find himself apprehended by the righteousness of God. It is Justification by Faith very strictly in an historical context, related to the eighteenth rather than the sixteenth century, and missing, as indeed most of Protestantism has missed, some of the poignancy and joy of Luther's intuitions at this point, Luther's enormous contribution not so much to theology as to ethics—his concept of Justification as the whole standing ground of our forgiven relationship with God, the term of all our commerce with God until our perfecting, in a joyful, free, spontaneous, creative life in the Holy Spirit which is well-spring of ever new and more wonderful patterns of behaviour.

The doctrines of Assurance and of the Witness of the Spirit declare it to be the privilege of believing Christians to know themselves to be forgiven children of God. It is the mood perfectly captured in the lines of Charles Wesley:

*Shall the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?*

There was nothing new in this. Wesley himself could point to many testimonies to his preaching in classical Anglican writings. You cannot read much Luther without coming up against *Heilsgewissheit* and *Glaubensgewissheit*. And this for Luther is not something connected merely with the promises declared in baptism, but is a real present, joyful confidence.

Wesley's Arminianism took him away from the Calvinist doctrine of Assurance which related it with Final Perseverance (see Werner Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes Nach Calvin*, Göttingen, 1957, pp.202ff.). It is true that the doctrine

was easily misunderstood. The emotional scenes of the Revival, and the innumerable examples of drastic conversion, brought on the Methodists Pusey's charge of teaching 'Justification by Feeling'. Sometimes, too, Charles's hymns were not as guarded as his brother's sermons. John once wrote to his brother: 'Beware of enthusiasm. I have much constitutional enthusiasm. You have much more.' Nevertheless, when Charles Wesley wrote:

*What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell,
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible,*

he probably did not intend 'feel' to refer simply to emotion, and the signs infallible were the fruits of the Spirit in new patterns of behaviour. It is true that there are still problems and I have sometimes wondered how Wesley would have answered the attack in *Pilgrim's Progress* which Christian makes upon Ignorance:

Christian. Why, or by what, art thou persuaded that thou hast left all for heaven?

Ignorance. My heart tells me so.

Christian. The wise man says that he who trusts his own heart is a fool.

Ignorance. That is spoken of an evil heart, but mine is a good one.

Christian. But how dost thou prove that?

Ignorance. It comforts me with hopes of heaven.

Christian. That may be through deceitfulness, for a man's heart may minister comfort to him in hopes of that thing for which he yet has no ground to hope.

Ignorance. But my heart and life agree together; and therefore my hope is well grounded.

Christian. Who told thee thy heart and life agree together?

Ignorance. My heart tells me so.

The statement that Methodism combines a Protestant doctrine of Justification with a Catholic doctrine of holiness is one that is so much over-simplified as to be dangerously misleading, and I would not accept it without grave qualification. But we might suggest that Wesley combines in a marvellous way the Pauline and Johannine elements in the Christian testimony when, within the safe orbit of sovereign grace and pardoning love, he insists on the power and good pleasure of the Father to fulfil in us his perfect will. Combining these doctrines, and of great interest, is John Wesley's doctrine of the use of the law in relation to believers—about which the document of cardinal importance will be found in his letter to Ebenezer Blackwell, *Letters*, 3.79ff. Here his emphasis is different from the Calvinist doctrine and from Melancthon's Third Use of the Law, and there is evidence in Lauri Haikolas's recent valuable study *Usus Legis* (Uppsala, 1958) that it has some links with Luther. By the law he means the Sermon on the Mount, preached to the converted believer, preached not so much as command but as promise and therefore forming a framework on which the soul can grow:

Whenever God gives a new degree of light he gives likewise a new degree of strength. Now I see that He that loves me bids me do this. And now I feel that I can do it through Christ strengthening me.

This doctrine of the Law in relation to believers safeguarded the subjective stress on saving faith as an experience and saved the doctrines of perfect love from becoming an enthusiastic antinomianism. On the other hand the doctrines of perfect love saved his use of the law from turning into a petrified and static moralism such as came to Puritanism and Pietism in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. And this stress on active love and on the practical demands of Christian philanthropy gave to John Wesley and his movement its sanity and creative power, and enabled them to do those works which are written deep in the history of England. About Christian Perfection I would say only one thing: it is this doctrine which, more even than Predestination, separates the Methodist from the Calvinist-Evangelical wings of the Revival. What Wesley says here I find only one person saying firmly in the 1800's, and that is Wesley's Irish High Church friend Alexander Knox. Knox says:

John Wesley's chief business was to form a more effectual connexion between the two schemes, of first principles and perfection than had ever been attempted before.

And the tie that binds the two men is surely that both for Wesley as for Knox the doctrine of Christian Perfection is no mere vague Spiritism as in modern holiness movements, but that the content is for him the example and pattern of the New Testament filled in with a great impressive literature of Anglican Puritan and Roman Catholic divines, not forgetting the catholic saints—as the famous M. de Renty. But it is not our doctrines taken singly, but rather taken all together in their coherent shape of the gospel, which are significant. Together with the mighty works of the Revival they contribute to a new articulation of the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit.

It is well known that the opinion is abroad in the Ecumenical Movement that the only significant Methodist contribution to it is organization and finance. Now it is true that John Wesley was neither a Luther nor a Calvin. Nobody among us, not even Dr Hildebrandt, is likely to say 'Mr Wesley says . . .' in the way in which some Lutherans seem to imply '*Luther locutus: causa finita est*'. But if in a real way the Churches of Luther and Calvin have brought into the ecumenical conversation the authentic accents of those giant reformers, must it not be meaningful for the men of our time to be reminded of John Wesley the great Apostolic Man at this time when the most urgent part of our task is to bring the gospel to the estranged multitudes without its borders?

What of our doctrines? In this Conference we have only begun to face the question whether the tie which binds us is Methodist theology or a common concentration on Biblical study—our participation in the examination, by a learned world which extends beyond the ecumenical movement and includes the Church of Rome, of the content of the apostolic faith in the light of Holy Scripture. There is an important principle here. The Protestant doctrine of the Church implies that she is always '*Ecclesia Reformanda*', always being renewed and reformed and criticized by the Word of God. In comparison with this the greatest Fathers of the Church, or all of them together, are of minor importance. Luther once said:

The Papists have many holy Fathers, but apart from John the Baptist and Paul I have none on my side save Augustine—and he it was who said, 'Don't in any wise believe

my works'. And he said more strongly in another place, 'I only will believe any teacher however greatly learned and holy in so far as he shows from scripture that he teaches the truth. That is how I want my books to be read.'

The historic creeds and confessions of the Church, the sermons of John Wesley, the hymns of Charles, are still immensely important. It matters that we can go back historically to the days of our origins and study our forefathers in those hours of crisis and decision in which they were raised up by the Spirit. These are the beacons, the lighthouses, the buoys, warning and guiding and beckoning the ship into the right channels; but the important moment is when the Pilot comes aboard and the supreme necessity is that He Himself should be at the helm. So it is with the Spirit in the Church.

It would not be hard to find in the present ecumenical concentration on the Bible truths which are going by default. There is lacking what I have called the 'optimism of Grace', which is very different from a secularized optimism or the conflation of liberal theology with the American and British ways of life, but is also different from a good deal of modern eschatological thinking, set so often in the minor key, reminiscent often of the seventeenth-century 'pessimism of Grace'. There is room for a gospel which does not flinch at the dire consequences of human depravity (since it is a theology of the Cross), and which sees as deeply into the tragic facts of human existence as any nihilist or existentialist, but which confidently proclaims the triumphant presence of the Risen Christ in this present evil age and a power of grace mighty to the overthrow of strongholds of evil. That same awareness of the divine power which comes from the living experience of the work of grace must give a new thrust to Christian thought and behaviour among the huge problems of our modern world. I understand, sympathize with, and much agree with the revulsion which Barth has carried through against the subjectivism which set in with Schleiermacher. I understand though I do not share the phobia about eighteenth-century Pietism which besets modern *Lutherforschung* and threatens to bedevil it. But here is something needing to be said which our Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian and Anglican friends are not saying. When Karl Barth began to write his great *Dogmatik* he had a Methodist housemaid in his house in Basel, and one day he showed her the MS. of his first volume which begins so magnificently with the objectivities of revealed religion, with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. 'Ah, Herr Professor,' she said, 'why do you spend your time on such things? Why don't you write about the new life of the children of God?' And when, a few months ago in London, Karl Barth spoke of the new truths he had learned in recent years, he came very near to saying something which he might have learned from a Methodist housemaid who knew what it was to cry with Charles Wesley:

*And shall the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?*

Between us and the eighteenth century lie 150 years of history—and what crowded, tumultuous history, what wars and revolutions, what vast changes in the mind of men! The great ages of political and social revolution, the new learning in science and history and Biblical criticism, the new forms of Churchmanship in Victorian Nonconformity and in the Free Church Alliance and in the movements in the Church of England and the Church of Rome—all these

were taking place when the self-contained world of Methodist thought was slowly becoming more aware of and sensitive to outside currents of thought and influence. We must at least face the possibility that the religion of modern Methodists bears more deeply the stamp of these things than of the original Methodism of the Wesleys. It is one of the clues to Protestant existence that it lies close to new currents of historic influence, is deeply sensitive to them, and is in danger of being tossed about by every new wind of doctrine. There are in that nineteenth century, moreover, important 'insights', Biblical insights, which we seek in vain in eighteenth-century religion.

There is in Luther much which is of beauty and value about a theology of the natural, and more than most people think about natural law. But it is in the nineteenth century, in Frederick Denison Maurice and his friends, that there is a return to the doctrines of Colossians and Ephesians, to a doctrine of Christ as the Head of the whole human race and the inspirer of all truth wherever it may be found, which, it seems to me, alone offers a theology of reconciliation to the estranged traditions of truth and justice in the modern world. I think we may say, that though this is not explicit in our inheritance, it is congruous with it, and that Scott Lidgett was right in finding in it something congruous with the temper of John Wesley and with the stresses of evangelical Arminianism. Similarly with Christian Perfection. With due deference to Dr Baker, I do not think the search for a corporate application of Christian Perfection is a logical inference of Wesley's doctrine. I think that when Dr Dale raised this question, he put us on a new and fruitful but essentially nineteenth- and twentieth-century line, though such exploration of the Christian ethic of love is of course congruous with the whole of Wesley's notion of salvation; but it would be better to seek it in the New Testament, and in Biblical theology rather than in Mr Wesley's *Plain account of Christian Perfection*.

So there are perhaps two words of Scripture which apply to us as we turn towards the future—the first the word from the Old Testament about possessing our possessions; the second from the New Testament, that we are to look not on our own things but on the things of others. Of all the great Protestant Churches, we and the Baptists, because of our freedom from state control, face in this age the deadly temptation to become and complacently remain great World Sects. Recently, in a fine and important study of the Church of England and its failure to win the working classes of our great Industrial cities, Canon Wickham pays tribute to Methodism; he finds in the flexibility of its evangelism, in the close solidarity of the class meeting, in its use of the laity, clues to the way in which in our time the Church must go forward. On the Continent, through the Church struggles of our time, the state Churches are learning to value the confessing, witnessing fellowship of believers; and when Karl Barth and Martin Niemöller speak of it, how tempting it is to say: 'Ah yes, at last you are coming to understand what we Free Churchmen, we Methodists, have known all along.' How easy it would be to take Canon Wickham's tribute and say, 'Ah yes, we Methodists have the clues', when we have them no longer, and when instead of patting ourselves on the back in our Ecumenical Methodist conferences we ought to be on our knees because we have let our house get into such grievous disrepair, on our knees with the grave and poignant cry: Can a man be born again when he is old? We have to earn our inheritance, to learn it

afresh and possess it anew. We need to nourish dogmatic thought, but even more to give heed to our spiritual and moral theology, and to remember that Wesley's *Christian Library* was like that of the Benedictine order, 'lectio divina', practical divinity able to build and edify the soul, at a time when the Free Churches are being out-prayed by the Anglicans and the Protestants are being out-prayed by the Church of Rome. Here, English Methodism owes a debt to, and should look to, its deaconess order, whose theological training is superior to that of the ministry in respect of prayer and the life of the soul—and we might remember that it was through congregations of devout women that the great mystical treasures of the medieval Church were preserved and handed down, and ask ourselves whether our women's movements do not need pointing to a deeper level than that of Women's Fellowships and Young Wives' Clubs.

We are to possess our possessions because we are looking, not only on our own things, but also on the things of others. This is a time when many of the traditions of many Churches are losing vitality, and when we need blood transfusion from one another. One of the deepest impulses of the ecumenical movement is the awareness of new enrichment which comes when separated Churches share together, in some new and living way, the gifts God gave their fathers. We have many things to offer to our separated brethren. Let us remember what we said at the beginning: what is distinctive is our history; what we have to give is, in the end, ourselves, for what are separated are not ideas and liturgies and institutions, but living companies of men and women. At our 1958 Conference in Newcastle we had been talking rather cagily and defensively, all of us, about relations with the Church of England, assuring one another that whatever happened we would not sell the pass. And then the Bishop of Newcastle came and shocked us into silence by telling how he had come from Lambeth where leaders of the Church of England had been talking of how their Church might die that the wider Church may live.

The whole life and history of Methodism constitute a treasure of the Church, but let us not idolize it or suppose that it must go on in history for all time. Let us realize that in history Churches have their day and cease to be. If it ever happens that Methodism becomes part of the past, like the seven Churches of Asia Minor, the Spirit will still be speaking to the Churches in other ways, and giving bounteous gifts. It may be that we are still at the beginning of Church history; it may be that what God waits to do for the Church in the future will far eclipse all the great things all the Churches have seen and enjoyed.

So in God's good time, as Dr Hildebrandt would say, we may make way for a greater Church. That will be a moment not of failure but of joy—not because, tired and old, we have petered out, but because, led by God, we await new energies from His creative Spirit. There was a day in the nineteenth century when a ship was towed down to Greenwich to be broken up—one of Nelson's ships of the line, second to the Victory at Trafalgar—now no guns, no sails, one of the wooden walls of eighteenth-century England towed by a smoky tug-boat, sign of a new age, in the red afternoon sun. And as it passed out of history, it re-entered it in a new way. Slowly it passed along the river, held in the eye and imagination of a great genius, and in the skill of J. M. W. Turner's famous painting, the *Fighting Temeraire* found a new life, a new perpetuation of its existence as an inspiration to coming days. What matters in Church history is

not man's experience of God, but Christ's experience of us. Our history is distinctive; but it is part of His history. He is the one who has experienced the whole from the very first.

He followed as a Rock His pilgrim people through all their wanderings in the desert; despite all their backslidings and their disobedience He came to them, and ruled them as a Shepherd King, faithfully, prudently, with all His power. In Him history and faith were one; for He was born, He suffered, He died, He rose again.

Last Sunday, after spending all day in Wesley's room in Lincoln College, and in moments trying to remind myself that this was after all our 'Montgomery caravan' where Wesley lived and thought and planned, I went to the Lord's table in Wesley Memorial Church and got my perspective right. Wesley Memorial—but the Lord of the Church is alive. And what we did in remembrance of Him at the table we did in His memory—who has known all His scattered companies from the beginning of their ways. Blest be the tie that binds, for it is the love of the Triune God which was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. *Amen.*

E. GORDON RUPP

The Editor is always pleased to consider articles, or suggestions for articles, for the LONDON QUARTERLY & HOLBORN REVIEW. Typescripts should not normally exceed 2,500 words in length, and a stamped addressed envelope should also be enclosed.

Our Contributors

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>GEORGE CLAUDE BAKER,
Jr.
PH.D., D.D., S.T.M.</p> | <p>Professor of Homiletics in Perkins School of Theology for six years, and since 1955 McCreless Professor of Evangelism. Is the author of four works and is a frequent broadcaster.</p> |
| <p>WILLIAM R. CANNON
PH.D., D.D., LL.D.</p> | <p>Dean and Professor of Church History and Historical Theology, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Georgia. Author of <i>The Theology of John Wesley</i>, etc.</p> |
| <p>C. A. COULSON
M.A., D.SC., PH.D., F.R.S.</p> | <p>Since 1952 has been Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics in the University of Oxford and Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. Vice-President Designate of the 1959 Methodist Conference.</p> |
| <p>RUPERT E. DAVIES
M.A., B.D.</p> | <p>Sometime Chaplain of Kingswood School, Bath. Tutor in Church History and the History of Christian Doctrine at Didsbury College, Bristol. Author of <i>The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers</i>, and <i>Why I am a Protestant</i>, etc.</p> |
| <p>L. HAROLD DEWOLF
PH.D., S.T.D.</p> | <p>Professor of Systematic Theology, Boston University. Author of four books, including <i>A Theology of the Living Church</i> and <i>The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective</i>, recently published.</p> |
| <p>A. RAYMOND GEORGE
M.A., B.D.</p> | <p>Wesley College, Headingley, Leeds. Joint-Secretary of the British Committee of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.</p> |
| <p>FRANZ HILDEBRANDT
PH.D., LIC. THEOL.</p> | <p>Professor of Christian Theology Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Author of <i>From Luther to Wesley</i> and other works.</p> |
| <p>E. ANKER NILSEN
M.A., PH.D.</p> | <p>Born in Porsgrunn, Norway, in 1904. Methodist Minister for 30 years. Chairman of the Eastern District of the Methodist Church in Norway. Author of <i>New Ways in Pastoral Care</i> and <i>From Anxiety to Security</i>.</p> |
| <p>HAROLD ROBERTS
M.A., D.D., PH.D.</p> | <p>Principal of Richmond College, Surrey, and Tutor in Systematic Theology. President of the World Methodist Council.</p> |
| <p>E. GORDON RUFF
M.A., D.D.</p> | <p>Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Manchester.</p> |
| <p>DAVID C. SHIPLEY
M.A., TH.M., PH.D.</p> | <p>Professor of Historical Theology, Southern Methodist University, and <i>interim</i> Professor of Christian Ethics, Yale University Divinity School.</p> |
| <p>MACK B. STOKES
B.D., PH.D.</p> | <p>Associate Dean and Parker Professor of Systematic Theology, Emory University. Author of <i>Major Methodist Beliefs</i>, etc.</p> |
| <p>WILLIAM STRAWSON
B.D., M.TH.</p> | <p>Tutor in Systematic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion, Handsworth College. Recognized Lecturer in Theology, University of Birmingham. Author of <i>Jesus and the Future Life</i>, the Fernley Hartley Lecture for 1959.</p> |
| <p>LILIAN TOPPING</p> | <p>Wesley Deaconess College, Ilkley, Yorks. Joint-Secretary of the British Committee of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.</p> |

NEW EPWORTH BOOKS

PASSION FOR SOULS

By K. F. Hulbert

The Forward Movement was the last great attack made on pagan England by Methodism, and out of it came the Central Halls at the heart of our great centres of population. Amongst the noble band of men who were called to serve in these great missions, none was more successful than Charles Hulbert. He served in eight of the largest missions, was responsible for the building of four Central Halls, and never ceased to manifest a consuming 'passion for souls'.

8s. 6d. net

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

By H. H. Rowley

No present-day scholar could possibly speak with more authority than Professor Rowley upon the matters coming within the purview of his title. He feels that there are wondrous rewards still awaiting both devoted scholarship and the diligent study which the humblest Christian can undertake. Scholarship is moving on from the study of sources to the study of *meanings*; and the author helpfully expounds this development.

2s. 6d. net

MAN IN COMMUNITY

By Russell P. Shedd, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.

This study of the meaning and implications of the Pauline doctrine of human solidarity has been prompted by current interest in the New Testament teaching about Church unity. No earlier work has treated the subject so comprehensively.

30s. net

HEIRS TO RESPONSIBILITY

By Dr Alfred C. Lamb

'Wrought to apostleship'—the phrase is St Paul's. He used it to describe St Peter. But Peter was not the only one to be so forged by God. Ten others underwent the same experience. When it was over God could transfer to their shoulders the responsibility for proclaiming His Saving Will and Word.

10s. 6d. net

SAINTS ALIVE!

By Canon Bryan Green

This book is intended for the ordinary man who wants to know something of what it means to be a Christian and to lead the Christian life. Thoughtful people have a right to be told what is implied in the demands of Christian discipleship before they are asked to make their surrender to Christ.

Paper covers 5s. 0d. net

Boards 7s. 6d. net

THE HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE

Explanatory Notes

By Francis B. Westbrook

The author has had in mind primarily candidates for Church Membership, but it is felt that older and more experienced members will find much of value in this simple and straightforward exposition of Methodist Doctrine.

5s. net

THE EPWORTH PRESS

25-35 City Road, London, E.C.1

NEW EPWORTH BOOKS

JESUS AND THE FUTURE LIFE The Fernley-Hartley Lecture for 1959

By William Strausson, M.Th.

A study of the synoptic teaching on the subject of eschatology, with special reference to the teachings of Jesus about personal destiny.

21s. net

THE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE IN POLITICS

By George Thomas, M.P.

The Beckly Lecture for 1959

The distinguished author, himself a devoted practising Christian high in the counsels of his Church as well as having become a noted Member of Parliament, says that Christian witness in politics must be based on three fundamentals of Christ's teaching—that people matter more than anything else in the world; that *service to others* is the mark of a good life; and that love is the only true foundation of a reasonable ethic.

8s. 6d. net

METHODISM AND THE TRADE UNIONS

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture for 1959

By R. F. Wearmouth, M.A., B.Sc., Ph.D.

5s. net

THE CONCEPT OF GRACE

Essays on the way of Divine Love in Human Life

By Philip S. Watson, M.A., B.D.

The word 'grace', already current in classical and Hellenistic Greek, received a great enrichment in meaning in the New Testament. In the course of Christian history this meaning has not infrequently been obscured and even debased, though it has never been wholly lost.

10s. 6d. net

FAITH FOR PERSONAL CRISIS

By Carl Michalson

Dr Michalson deals with the seven following situations: Anxiety, Guilt, Doubt, Vocation, Marriage, Suffering, and Death. He starts off with Anxiety because that is basic to all situations and is the ingredient most likely to contribute to crises.

15s. net

THE POLITICS OF ENGLISH DISSENT

By Raymond G. Cowherd

The author has carefully delineated the connexions between the religious and political activity of the movements that carried England along the road from aristocracy to democracy. This is an important contribution to the literature on early nineteenth-century English social and political history.

21s. net

THE EPWORTH PRESS

25-35 City Road, London, E.C.1